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MAX PAYNE 3
12-page Strategy

REVIEWED

PlayStation - The Official Magazine Issue 61 (August 2012)

Burning Skies
Lollipop Chainsaw

BEFORE THE RAGE, BEFORE THE POWER ...

GOD OF WAR ASCENSION

Exclusive screens and info on Kratos' gory new prequel

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TOMB RAIDER DEAD SPACE 3 **INJUSTICE** ASSASSIN'S CREED

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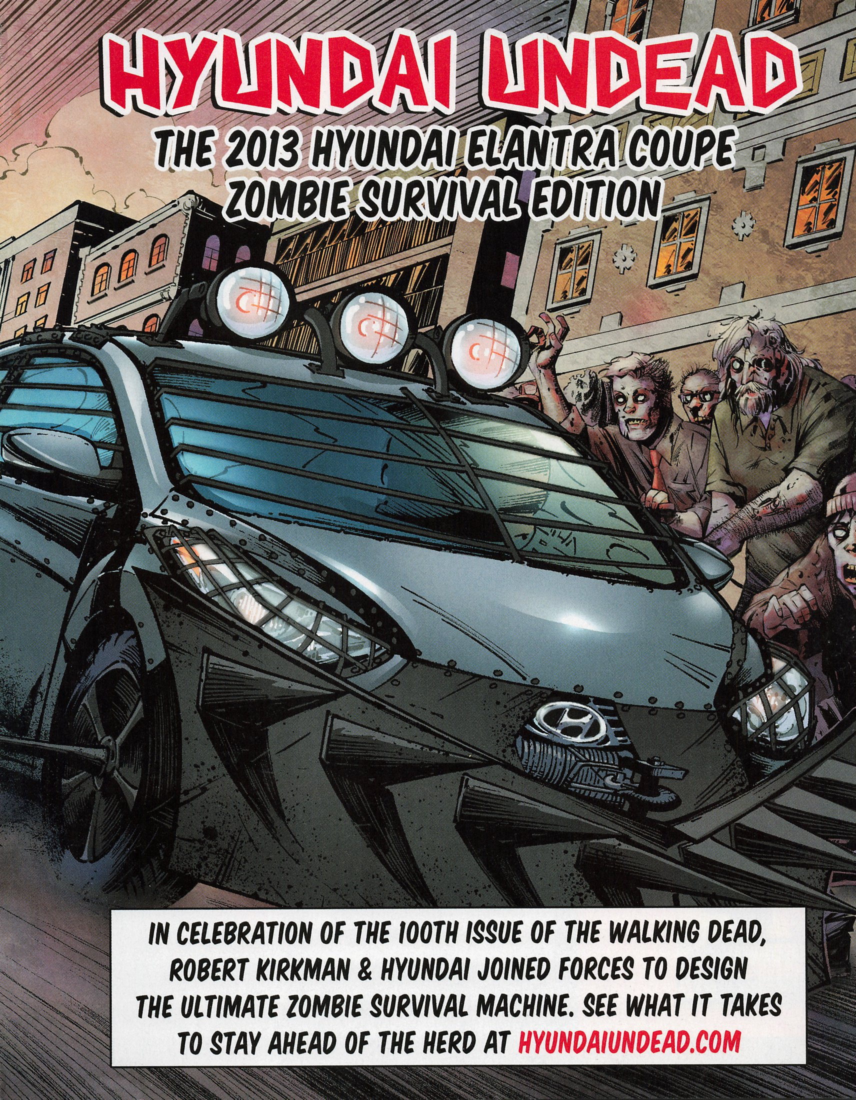

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AUGUST 2012

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Meet young Kratos. He's sleek, ambitious, and slightly less angry than what we're used to. Now meet *God of War's* multiplayer mode.

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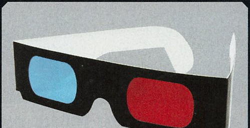

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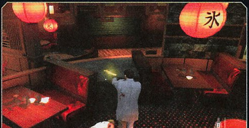

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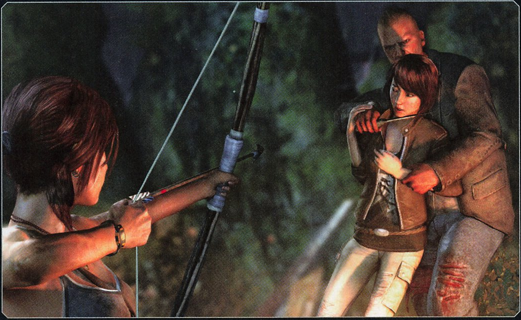
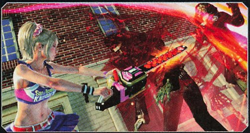


24 TOMB RAIDER
Survival is the name of Lara Croft's new game. Well, technically it's still *Tomb Raider*, but before she was a busty badass, Croft was a scared girl fighting to stay alive.



74 LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW
It's got glitter, zombies, and sexy cheerleaders, but something's still missing.

Message in a Bottle

Random thoughts and wishes for PS4

I usually don't like to put a timestamp in my Ed Note. After all, I write my column as we're about to ship an issue, with the knowledge (and some fear) that my random thoughts of the moment will have no relevance (or be old hat) by the time my words are finally read several weeks later. It's very much a "message in a bottle" experience, since all I can do is wish for the best as I toss my opinions into the editorial ocean.

Well, at this moment, I'm standing on the metaphoric beach just days before the start of E3 2012. I have a good idea of some of the things I'll see there, but I'm pretty much like everyone else in that there will be some unexpected surprises that come out of the show—and Sony's press conference. FYI: I *don't* expect PS4 news (I'm still predicting that announcement to come at September's Tokyo Game Show). But PS4 has been on my mind lately, so what if I took my bottle and tossed it a bit further with some thoughts for Sony on their next-gen console?

Amongst the [absolutely unconfirmed] PS4 rumors that have circulated lately, there's been talk that PS4 might not have an optical drive and that it won't play used games. Yes, I know downloading and streaming is the future, but there's still something wonderful about opening up a game case for the first time, of sitting back and admiring a shelf full of Blu-ray movies and games, of being able to lend a game to friend to experience and treasure like a good book—of actually still being able to *own* the media I enjoy and love.

I don't yet know what PS4 will bring, but these are some intrinsic elements of our gaming past and culture that I hope aren't tossed aside in the race to the future.

Roger Burchill
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Dan Fitzpatrick just wants us to make him feel like he's the only Art Director in the world. Like he's the only one we'll ever love. Like he's the only one who knows our art.

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Senior Editor
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Though Scott Butterworth once swore he would never put a ring on anything, he now finds himself married to his job. They are currently expecting their first child.

Mikel Reparaz
Executive Editor
twitter.com/Wikiparaz

Some people once told Mikel Reparaz he was a firework and he told them to f*** right off because that song is stupid and makes no sense.

Anne Lewis
Assistant Editor
twitter.com/BDRAnneLewis

Anne Lewis has that boom, badoom, boom, boom, badoom, boom, bass. She's been cited several times and will lose her license if she doesn't turn her music down.

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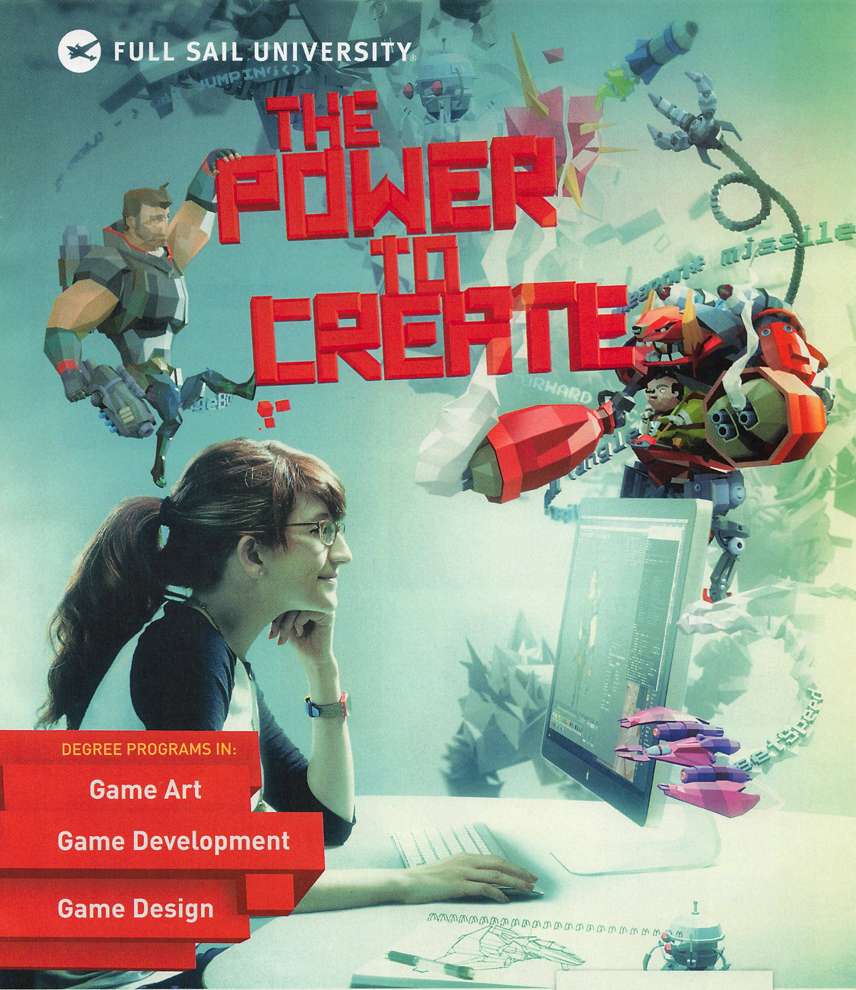

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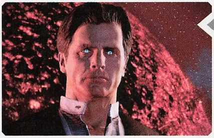

AUG 03

Keeping the Sheen
Martin Sheen celebrates his 72nd birthday today. Odd, we didn't think the Illusive Man looked 72. Must be all that space anti-aging magic.

04

Barack Obama's 51st Birthday
Growing up, we were told to never discuss politics or religion in public, so we'll just say happy birthday, Mr. President.

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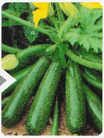
ATLUS

07

Get a Clue
The wonderfully hilarious movie "Clue" (yes, based on the board game) arrives on Blu-ray today and anyone who hasn't seen it should pick it up. Seriously.
In Stores: *Persona 4 Arena*

08

Creepers Love Veggies
Today is *Sneak Some Zucchini onto Your Neighbor's Porch Day*... WHAT IS THIS? WHY? What kind of crazy person "sneaks" vegetables onto their neighbor's porch?



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Outside Lands 2012 (8/10-8/12)
With headliners like Metallica, Stevie Wonder, and Beck here in our very own backyard, we know where we will be for the next few days.

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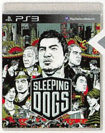

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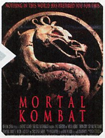
Let the Dogs Out
It's hard to let *Sleeping Dogs* lie; we've waited for them to wake up since *True Crime: Hong Kong* was cancelled. That wait ends today.
In Stores: *Darksiders II*

17

More KABOOM, Please
Sometimes we look at our soft middle areas and dream of a life of shootouts and explosions. Then we watch *The Expendables 2* and miss our safe desks.

18

Silver Screen... Fatality!
When the first *Mortal Kombat* movie was released this day in 1995, it was at the peak of... No. We can't do this. It wasn't good then, and it isn't good now.


NOTHING IN THIS WORLD HAS PREPARED YOU FOR THIS
MORTAL KOMBAT

I Quit!!

21

Holy Trinity
We saw Carrie-Anne Moss in *The Matrix*, we heard her in *Mass Effect*, and we stared at her from afar while she ate birthday cake today. (*Creeeeeeepy.*)
In Stores: *Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2*

24

PAX Prime Then
The first Penny Arcade Expo started today in 2004 and celebrated games in a big, big way. Now, eight years later. it's bigger and gamier than ever.

27

Just Because Day
Today we're going to steal a police car, put a donkey in it, and leave it in the middle of a park. Just because.

28

The End Cometh
As its title suggests, things don't look good for Cybertron with the release of *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron* today.
In Stores: *Madden NFL 13*

31

PAX Prime Now (8/31-9/2)
We love PAX. It's crowded, the food is expensive, and it smells very strongly of men, but we love it. Now if you'll excuse us, we have a three-hour line to stand in.

* Release dates are subject to change by the publishers.

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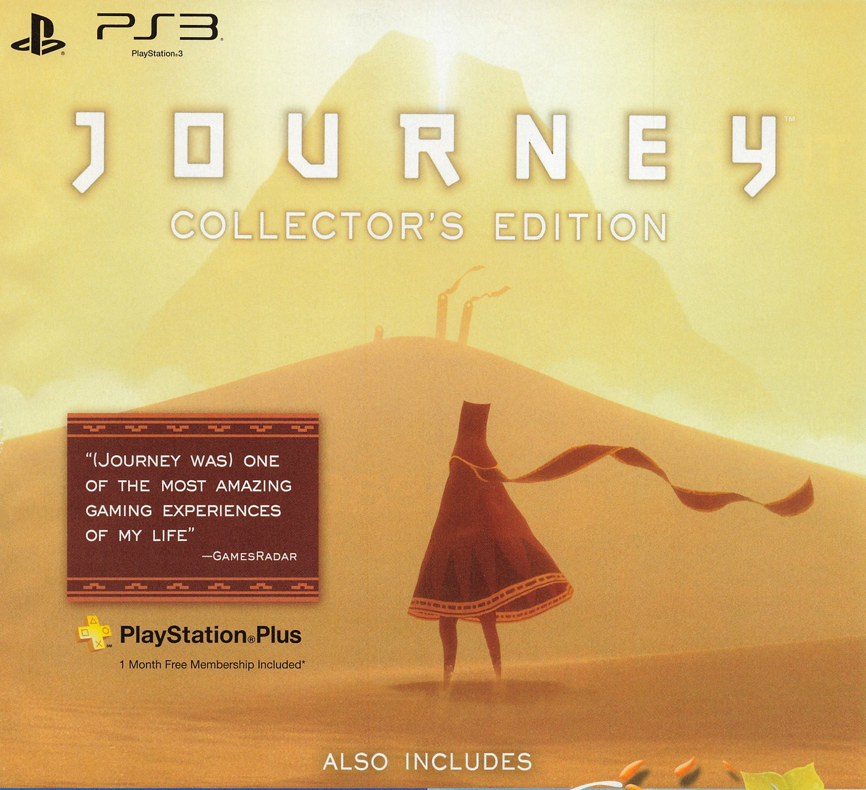

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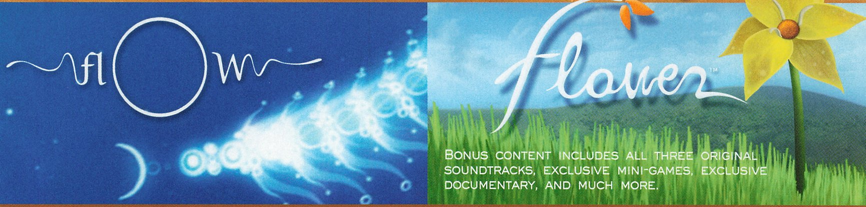

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Pocket-Size Thief
Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time confirmed for a Vita appearance.
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Next-Gen Ready
Epic shows us what the future looks like with Unreal Engine 4.
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Massive Attack
Activision goes huge with *Skylanders: Giants*.
⏩Page 17

In The Works
Michel Ancel on the little-seen *Beyond Good & Evil* sequel.
⏩Page 20

The Great Debate
How much nostalgia is too much? PTOM editors weigh in.
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1 Dead Space

Human enemies? A cover system? *Co-op?* Dead Space 3 turns the horror series on its head.

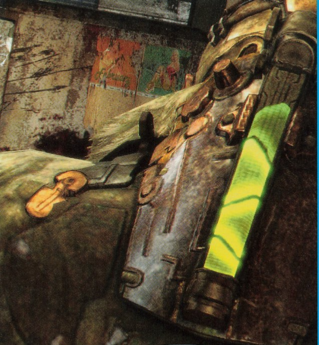
With their claustrophobic corridors, skin-crawling sound design, and grotesque humanoid monsters, the *Dead Space* games have always been plenty terrifying. But with arrival of *Dead Space 3*, it would seem the developers at Visceral Games have embraced one of the scariest things of all: change. While the underlying third-person shooter mechanics remain intact (players can still use engineer-turned-badass Isaac Clarke's arsenal of mining tools to strategically dismember all those mutated necromorphs just as they've done in previous games), *Dead Space 3* introduces plenty of series firsts.

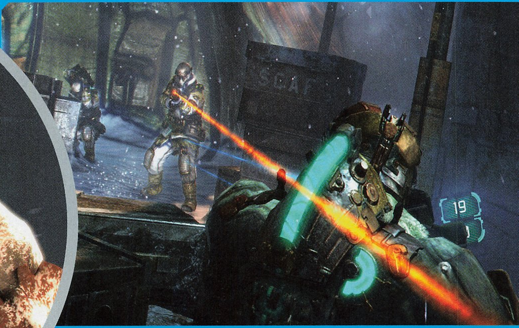
The biggest and most obvious is the inclusion of co-op. Rough-and-tumble space marine John Carver joins the cast as a playable character who can accompany Isaac on his deeply freaky journey. Unlike most cooperative games, however, co-op is neither a separate mode nor a mandatory component of the campaign. If we want to play through the main story mode alone for a more classic (read: horrifying) *Dead Space* experience, we can fly solo as Isaac and never know the difference. In the event that we choose to bring a friend along, the narrative dynamically adjusts to accommodate both characters.

During our recent demo, we watched the same cutscene play out two different ways depending on the number of characters present. The impact on the overall plot was the same, but the tone and content differed significantly, making *Dead Space 3* like two games in one. Luckily, we won't necessarily have to play through twice to get a taste of both, since we can join any friend's game at any time regardless of how far we've progressed into the campaign. We can even take our entire inventory with us.

Action! Action!

Beyond co-op, the next biggest change is the snowy terrestrial setting. For the first time in series history, the majority of the action takes place on a planet rather than in space (though the developers promised us that both zero-gravity and space itself will appear in some form). Apparently, Isaac and last game's reluctant heroine, Ellie, crash-landed on the icy, inhospitable Tau Volantis just months after the conclusion of the previous game. As if that weren't bad enough, the world seems to be overrun not only with necromorphs but armed Unitologist





> "The story will finally offer definitive answers about some of the series bigger mysteries."

soldiers as well.

For the uninitiated, Unitology is essentially a cult that worships a series of mysterious Markers that may or may not be alien in origin and may or may not have caused the necromorph virus to spread. According to the developers, the story will finally offer definitive answers about some of the series' bigger mysteries. But in the meantime, these religious extremists are out to get Isaac, and unlike other *Dead Space* enemies, they've actually got weapons. As such, the developers have introduced a simple, dynamic cover system—another series first. When crouched next to an appropriate piece of cover, Isaac will automatically position himself so he's out of harm's way, leaving us free to maneuver.

Just as *Dead Space 2* favored action more than the original, *Dead Space 3* seems to move even further in that same direction. In addition to armed enemies and the cover system, the game also features more automatic firearms, bigger boss fights and "epic moments," limited resource management, and even some off-the-rails exploration that will give us a chance to take side missions. But rest assured—even though this may sound distressingly unfamiliar, the team at Visceral assured that the game will somehow still retain the feeling of an authentic *Dead Space* experience. Too bad we'll have to wait until early next year to judge for ourselves.

Dev Talk

"We want experiences that hit on a base level with people and elicit a certain kind of reaction, a primal kind of reaction. All of the games we're making at Visceral have to have that part of them. So Dead Space will continue to have that same feeling. I think that's the theme with the studio, and that's the theme with Dead Space."

Steve Papoutsis,
Visceral Games
Studio Head

2 Sly Cooper comes to Vita

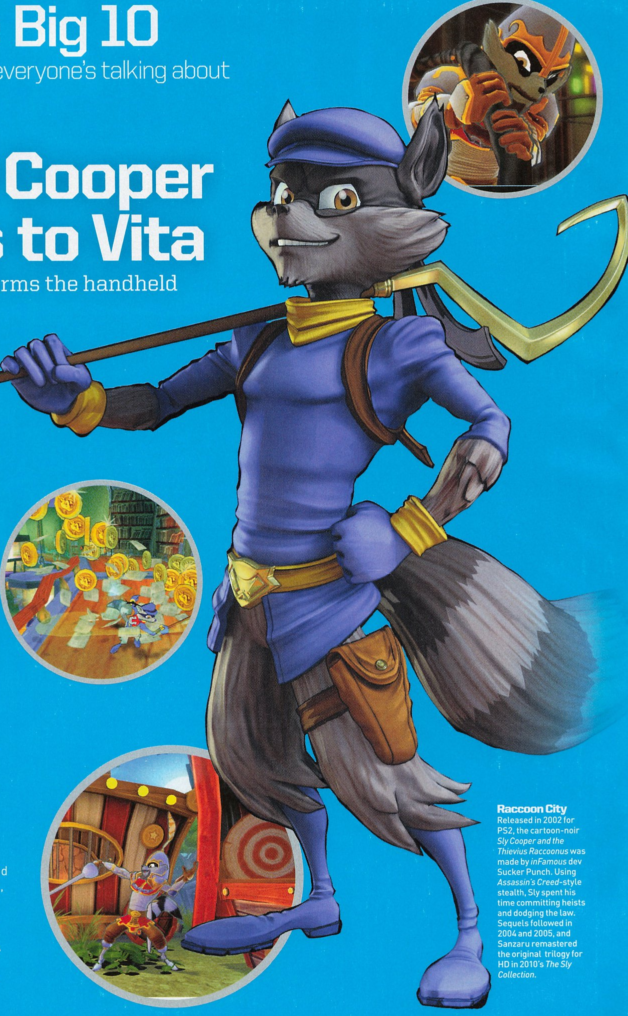
Thieves in Time storms the handheld

If you've missed his stripy thief-ness, then rejoice! Stealthy raccoon Sly is back this autumn in a new colorful adventure—and not just on your PS3. New dev to the series Sanzaru Games has revealed that the full version of the much-anticipated actioner will not only be playable on Vita, but will also utilize the cross-platform save feature.

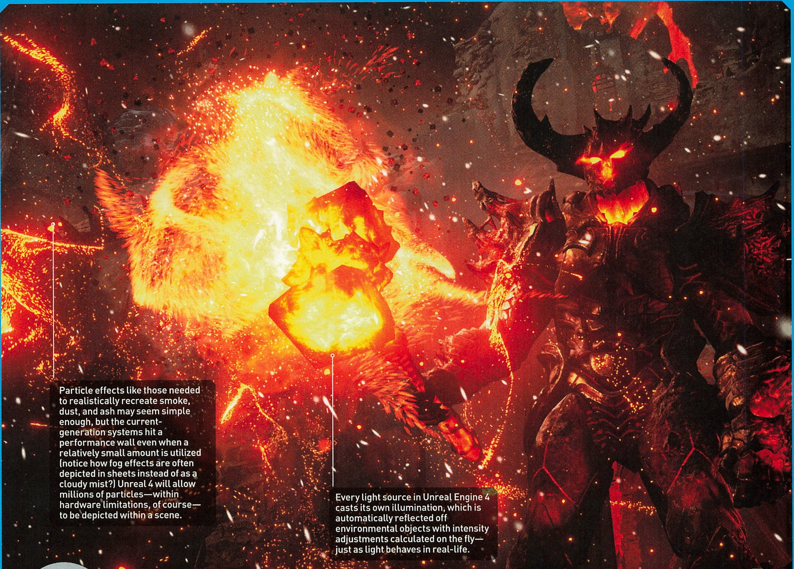
"The portable version will contain all the same awesome action you'll find on PS3, along with cool Vita-specific features that incorporate the touch-screens and motion controls," explains Sanzaru president Glen Egan. "It will also feature cross-save capability, so you'll be able to save the game from either machine and pick up right where you left off."

Initially announced at E3 2011, *Thieves In Time* follows directly from *Honor Among Thieves*, and this time around, Sly's love interest—the foxy (sorry) Inspector Carmelita—will be a playable character.

"We're thrilled to finally show Carmelita in action," says Egan. "She's a big fan favorite, and everyone will love how she looks and plays." Armed with her shock pistol, Carmelita will bring over-the-shoulder shooting to the madness, while Sly tries to save the Cooper clan from being destroyed as pages of the ancient Thievius Raccoonus disappear. Expect to learn more as we near release.



Raccoon City
Released in 2002 for PS2, the cartoon-noir *Sly Cooper and the Thievius Raccoonus* was made by *inFamous* dev Sucker Punch. Using *Assassin's Creed*-style stealth, Sly spent his time committing heists and dodging the law. Sequels followed in 2004 and 2005, and Sanzaru remastered the original trilogy for HD in 2010's *The Sly Collection*.



Particle effects like those needed to realistically recreate smoke, dust, and ash may seem simple enough, but the current-generation systems hit a performance wall even when a relatively small amount is utilized (notice how fog effects are often depicted in sheets instead of as a cloudy mist?) Unreal 4 will allow millions of particles—within hardware limitations, of course—to be depicted within a scene.

Every light source in Unreal Engine 4 casts its own illumination, which is automatically reflected off environmental objects with intensity adjustments calculated on the fly—just as light behaves in real-life.

3

The next-gen is Unreal

Unreal Engine 4 is here and we get a glimpse of gaming's future

As much as we yearn to discover every scrap of info about PS4, the greatest indicator of what we might expect in the next-generation of videogames may be Epic Games' recent tech demo of its forthcoming Unreal Engine 4.

Epic's Unreal Engine 3 is a mainstay of current-generation console game development, and continues to thrive, with games like BioShock Infinite, Dishonored, and DmC: Devil May Cry being built upon its foundation. But as Epic bluntly stated before unveiling its new engine, Unreal 3 is of the PS3 and Xbox 360 generation, and Unreal 4 is built strictly for the next-gen.

The demo we saw began with a video that depicted an armored demon knight stirring to life within his mountain fortress. The visual feast was at least on par with what we often see in current-gen cutscenes and cinematics, but this wasn't CGI—rather, every bit of the scene was created using Unreal Engine 4 and running on a PC with a single consumer-level (albeit currently top-tier) graphics card. What was truly amazing was the amount of hardware-taxing effects simultaneously displayed onscreen in the demo; amazingly detailed, near-photorealistic characters and objects, all bathed in dynamic lighting with real-time reflective qualities, immersed in particle effects of smoke, dust, and glowing embers that would bring contemporary systems to their slow, chugging knees.

But the real key to Unreal Engine 4's magic is the relative ease with which game developers will be able to implement these features. Because the engine is capable of handling design changes on the fly, devs will no longer have to recode an entire scene when they implement or experiment with environmental and gameplay elements. Suddenly, wholesale changes to a game level become a design option rather than a time and money sink, and the tweaking process transforms from arduous and protracted to simple and quickly implementable.

Just think of the possibilities... We're sure legions of game developers already are.

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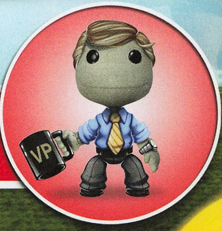

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE

> "We're just focused on doing our work, and making that the best stuff we can do. The labels, everything else, whatever, it's just noise."

—Mark Lamia, Treyarch

4 Taking command

Treyarch studio head Mark Lamia on the decisions behind Call of Duty: Black Ops II's futuristic Cold War

Is Treyarch now the "A-team" developer for *Call of Duty*?
I think we see ourselves as the *Black Ops* team. The Treyarch *Black Ops* team. The team doesn't really look to those designations for the validation that we have for our work. We look to our fans who play it, and we know there's a lot of them that enjoy *Black Ops*, which is why we wanted to push it on this one for them. We thought we were giving them something unique inside the *Call of Duty* franchise with *Black Ops*, but was still, you know, a *Call of Duty* game. And felt like we wanted to do that again. It's a team that's pretty deep with veteran *Call of Duty* developers that have been making *Call of Duty* for a long time.

So coming from that place, they wanted to branch out on this one, and introduce new gameplay and new concepts, and new ways to play and enjoy *Call of Duty*. We don't come from a place of trying to compare ourselves to other folks. We're just focused on doing our work, and making that the best stuff we can do. The labels, everything else, whatever, it's just noise.

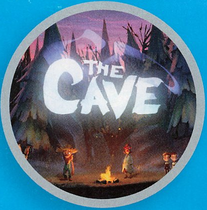
Has community feedback played a role in shaping *Black Ops II*, or is it more a matter of what the dev team wants?
It's a combination. Yeah, absolutely, it comes from within, and your decision-making will come from within. But I think inside our culture, there's a healthy amount of paying attention to what's going on in the world. Paying attention to what's going on with our community, and the larger *Call of Duty* community. Those are our fans. Those are the people who we think about, aside from ourselves, when we're making the game.

Sometimes they say they want things that may or may not make sense in the game design, just based on where we're headed, but there's usually something interesting about what they're saying there, and whether you can apply it to your game design.

Why create a narrative rooted in two different time periods?
There were a couple things. One was, we wanted to make a sequel to *Black Ops* with the characters you played as in *Black Ops*. That was an objective [writer] Dave [Goyer] had. He wanted to tell their stories, but he also wanted to reconcile that with an entirely new challenge of creating an era that we hadn't done before, working in that new era and being able to come up with all new kinds of gameplay and achieve those objectives.

That dovetailed nicely with this story arc he wanted to create, with the villain, and he liked the idea of being able to have the first Cold War and then juxtapose it with what the future of warfare would look like, but then also see how that character's origins were created in a different time and a different situation with those characters but then being able to see how that all manifested itself later. That's just how he crafted it. We wanted to create a sequel with those characters and we wanted an entirely new timeframe, and we kind of put all these pieces together and crafted this entire generation-spanning fiction, something we talked about doing in the past as well. We kind of like the idea of multiple periods. *Black Ops* is *Black Ops*. It doesn't denote a particular time period. It just denotes a *Black Ops* fiction.

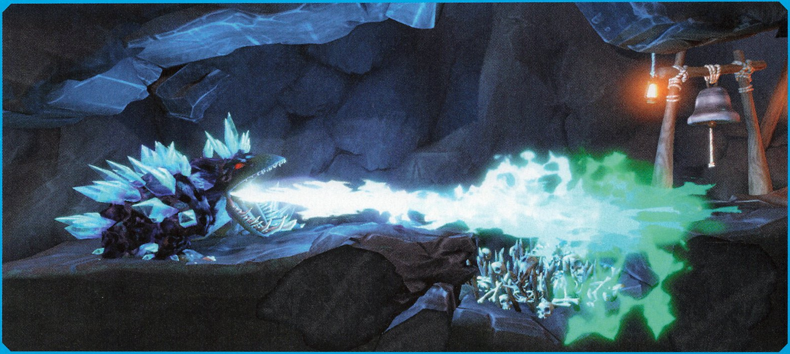
This is the first Treyarch game set chronologically after the *Modern Warfare* series. Is *Black Ops II* part of a separate universe, or will we see an America that was invaded by Russia 12 years before?
It *is* its own fiction, but *Black Ops* was set up as its own fiction. Like I said, when we create the *Black Ops* fiction, we assume everything that happened in the past happened in the past, and that the future hasn't happened yet, but we're trying to project a new fiction for that future. The seeds of it are being sown into the headlines right now, even if people aren't aware of it.



5

Know thyself

Developer Double Fine's The Cave takes adventure games spelunking



Most caves contain things like bats and stalactites and a deep, all-consuming darkness. *Most* caves. Double Fine Production's *The Cave*, on the other hand, possesses the key to *self-actualization*, not to mention a series of mind-bending puzzles for players to tackle in classic adventure-game fashion. According to adventure game guru Ron Gilbert—creator of classics like *Maniac Mansion* and the *Monkey Island* series—the titular talking cavern can teach people truths about themselves, so all those seeking answers travel from far and wide to bask in the cave's wisdom.

The game features seven such truth-seekers: a monk, an adventurer, a hillbilly, a scientist, a set of twins, a knight, and a time traveler. Naturally, each comes equipped with a unique special ability, as well as a deeply personal motive that will be explored over the course of the campaign. Of those characters, however, players will select just three before entering the cave. While the devs promise that no particular trio is superior to any other, it will still take multiple playthroughs to see every story and utilize every skill.

The cave itself—in addition to serving as the narrator and a character in its own right—is an elaborate series of interconnected 2D rooms that players navigate as they would in a side-scrolling platformer. Instead of combat, however, players are challenged with cooperative puzzles that involve operating all three characters in concert. If the scientist and hillbilly must hold two switches to open a gate, for example, the knight may have to run through that gate to activate the third and final switch that keeps the gate open permanently.

The puzzles grow far more complex as the game progresses (we saw one that involved a hotdog vending machine, a dinner bell, and a giant crane-claw), but the game always maintains that silly, lighthearted sense of humor typical to Double Fine games. Plus, players never really have to worry much about dying. The cave, as Gilbert warmly explained, is a safe place to explore. Too bad we'll have to wait until 2013 to start exploring for ourselves.

Fine Times

Double Fine is renowned for its ability to create quirky, personality-laden games. Here's a list of the studio's prior work available for PlayStation:

Stacking (PSN, 2011)
Costume Quest (PSN, 2010)
Brütal Legend (PS3, 2009)
Psychonauts (PS2, 2005)

6 Towering Toys

Skylanders: Giants takes "bigger is better" to new heights

Count us among those surprised by the success of *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure*. While admittedly a quality kids-oriented videogame (we scored it 8/10 in our January 2012 issue), sales of over 30 million games and toy figurine accessories have propelled Activision's new franchise into the realm of phenomenon.

When asked if he was surprised by the enormous success of *Spyro's Adventure*, the series' executive producer, Greg Krager, gets as giddy as a tyke scoring a new collectible toy: "We knew we had something special and were capturing something very magical we really believed in, so we weren't surprised that kids responded to the world, the characters, and the magic of physical toys meeting the digital world. Where the surprise came was in just how much kids wanted a big collection... they wanted more toys than we anticipated."

With the upcoming sequel *Skylanders: Giants*, Krager and his team are more than happy to meet the growing demand for the plastic playthings that come to in-game life when placed on the Portal of Power peripheral. Joining the adorable ranks of the previous game's toys, the titular titans bring new powers and abilities to the family-friendly action-RPG. The towering Tree Rex, for example, can clear away enemies with a ground-pound attack and obliterate obstacles with his trunk-like limbs.

While Tree Rex—representing the Life class—is bundled with the game, players can recruit up to eight Giants, one from each of the elements. That said, existing and new Skylanders, such as the Air-based Jet Vac, will all be supported. While the Giant-driven narrative certainly encourages players to pick up the oversized creatures, Krager ensures all of Spyro's pals will have a place in *Giants*: "There's still value and fun in playing as a regular Skylander... everyone's important, everyone's equal in Skyland."

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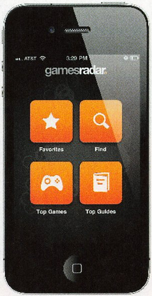

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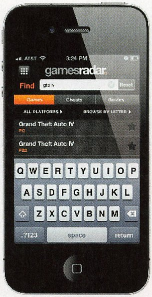

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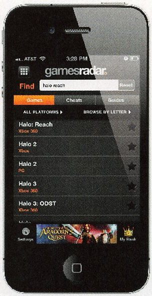

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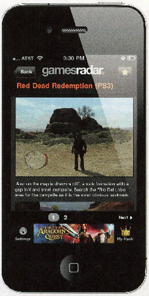

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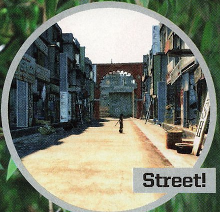
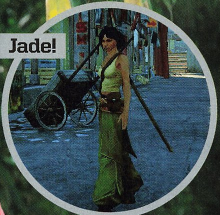
Ancel is currently working on *Rayman Legends*—but it's not hard to guess what he'll be up to after that.





7

Is Jade's big comeback real?

Creator Michel Ancel talks Beyond Good & Evil's return

Why BG&E matters

So why the fuss over an increasingly ancient game? 2003's *Beyond Good & Evil* was a colorful mix of *Zelda* and *Pokémon Snap*—the story of a photojournalist and her uncle (who happened to be a pig) fighting against an alien invasion and a sinister dictatorship. It was the exploration of the bizarre and beautiful planet of Hillys, though, that captured the imagination. If you've never sampled its strange delights, then a playthrough of the PSN HD version is strongly advised.

The sequel to gaming classic *Beyond Good & Evil* last made an official appearance with a trailer way back in 2008, and since then its development at Ubisoft Montpellier has been a thing of mystery. Recently, however, the internet went insane over a leaked screenshot of a familiar photojournalist (green lipstick not visible) standing in a tumbledown fish market.

So can we start our hype machine once again? An exclusive chat with creator Michel Ancel suggests that, at the very least, we can keep it idling. "It's a very personal project," he explains. "It's something I'd love to finish and to do. Unfortunately, we need a lot of time to make it."

Ancel is currently hard at work on *Rayman Legends*, a follow-up to the sublime 2D platforming of *Origins*—while also coordinating the next DomZ attack. "It's not the kind of game where you're working on it as a 'main thing'," he underlines. "There's a mix of research that we're doing in 3D. It's ambitious—we want to make the game of our dreams."

As for how the game will play, Ancel has said he favors third-person, *Assassin's Creed*-style movement, and not necessarily the Mirror's Edge rooftop racing outlined in early leaked videos.

Slow mover

He goes to great pains, however, to underline that the game isn't undergoing any form of the torture so often referred to as "development hell." "Some games have you waiting for ten years, then they're released and you're disappointed," he says. "There are different reasons for a game taking a long time, and sometimes it's because there are lots of reboots during development. This isn't the case [here]. We're doing research. We have engineers working on big cities and massive environments. It's really about doing all the technical research and making it as good as we'd love it to be."

So when might *Beyond Good & Evil 2* finally see release? What with Ancel's ongoing Rayman work, and the fact that this sequel's tech is still in the oven, we can expect to see Jade's re-debut on the next generation of console—whenever that may be. And as a choice of covergirl, PlayStation 4 could do far worse than Jade.

8 Well Played

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Celebrate this month's cover god at the height of his power and tragic glory. The Blades of Exile and Claws of Hades are included and can be attached to his back.

Mass Effect 3

Commander Shepard / Garrus Vakarian / Ashley Williams • $65 each • ETA September • square-enix-shop.com

Coming this fall, *Mass Effect 3* figures join the Play Arts Kai line up. Yes, we know it's in the game, but try to make your Shepard...ahem...behave himself.

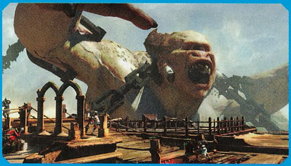
Batman: Arkham Asylum

Batman / The Joker / Harley Quinn
$60 each • square-enix-shop.com

The Dark Knight and his "toys" have never looked better, but we're fascinated by his nemesis' Joker Teeth. How does he manage to keep them so sparkly bright?

9 The Readers' Most Wanted

While much of the top 10 remains the same (with *Black Ops II* and *Grand Theft Auto V* switching places yet again) the second half of the list has games jumping all over the place. *Battle Royale, Crysis 3,* and *Saints Row* expansion *Enter the Dominatrix* hopped in shortly after being announced. *God of War: Ascension* also takes its rightful place high on the list, and we're sure it will climb even higher as more is revealed.



01 *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*
02 *Grand Theft Auto V*
03 *Assassin's Creed III*
04 *Resident Evil 6*
05 *Madden NFL 13*
06 *God of War: Ascension*
07 *DmC: Devil May Cry*
08 *NBA Live 13*
09 *NBA 2K13*
10 *BioShock Infinite*
11 *The Amazing Spider-Man*
12 *Medal of Honor: Warfighter*
13 *Borderlands 2*
14 *Ratchet & Clank Collection*
15 *FIFA Soccer 13*
16 *PlayStation All-Stars: Battle Royale*
17 *Crysis 3*
18 *Saints Row: The Third – Enter the Dominatrix*
19 *Transformers: Fall of Cybertron*
20 *NHL 13*

BIOSHOCK INFINITE

CRYSIS 3

Stats in this chart appear courtesy of Ipsos OTX MediaCT's GamePlan Insights. All games are PS3 titles. Polling data was tabulated on May 29, 2012.

10 Are gamers blinded by nostalgia?

And will we eventually get HD re-releases of HD re-releases?

Yes
Says the progressive
Scott Butterworth

In conversations and on Internet forums, I constantly hear the same questions: "Why doesn't anybody do anything new and original? Where are all the fresh ideas?" Well, the answer to that is simple: Publishers pay developers to produce titles that they know will sell, with brand recognition or a built-in following. Anything that's a sure bet, really. The *real* question is, why do we keep buying this stuff?

Gaming is trapped in a vicious cycle of mining old IPs and iterating established franchises to death and re-releasing newer versions of old games, and the truth is, we're all to blame for it because we consistently support the practice. By spending money on HD remakes and franchise reboots, we tacitly reinforce the notion that known quantities sell better than risky new ideas and thereby guarantee beloved but low-selling games like *Mirror's Edge* won't get made nine times out of 10.

I'm not going to pretend I'm not guilty here too. When the HD updates of the *Metal Gear Solid* games hit PS3, you bet your ass I paid money for games I already own, in a new format. I'm a little ashamed, but on the other hand, I absolutely love *Metal Gear* and I also do my best to support indie titles as well. That's the key: Be a discerning consumer. Remember every dollar is a vote. Don't let your nostalgia win out every time, and soon we might see some change.

No
Says the retrospective
Mikel Reparaz

Okay, fine, gamers are maybe a *little* blinded by nostalgia. It's not entirely our fault; popular culture as a whole has been struggling to push back the clock for a while. Reboots of '80s cartoons are everywhere, Hollywood has become a mechanism for repackaging wretched old TV shows as wretched new movies, and "retro" things have never been more popular. The *real* real question is, is this a bad thing?

It's easy to cluck disdainfully as we shell out cash for the same old experiences, but at least we know we'll *like* them. And the industry isn't shoving this stuff down our throats—it gives it to us because we *want* it. No other medium can invest us in its worlds and characters like games, so why *wouldn't* we want more? Why shouldn't we try to relive those experiences?

Buying an HD remaster of a game we already own isn't any different from buying a Blu-ray of a beloved movie. And while we're on the topic, it's not unreasonable to demand, say, a reboot of *XCOM* that perfectly replicates my memories of playing the 1994 original, right down to the feeling that its graphics were cutting-edge.

Nostalgia only becomes a problem when it drives us to buy bad games—but when beloved franchises or HD remakes go bad, gamers lose interest. And if nostalgia makes us pass up *good* games sometimes, then hey, we can always catch them when they're re-released on future consoles.

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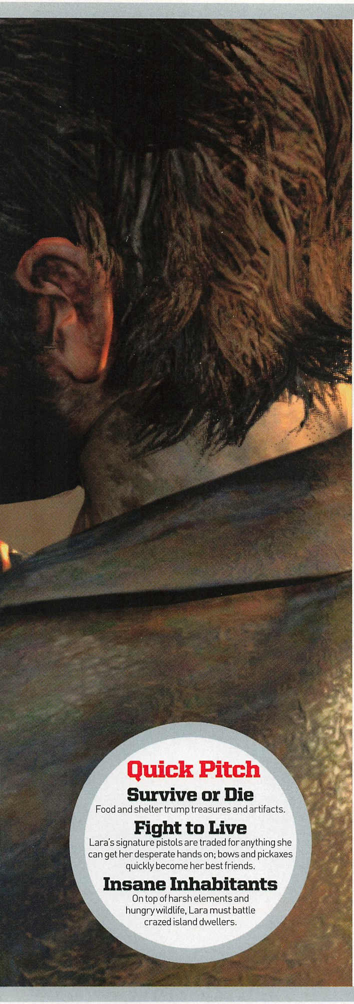

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Tomb Raider

Lara trades treasure-seeking for deer-hunting and despair

Our last look at Lara Croft's origin story/reboot shelved her buxom, fortune-and-glory hunter persona in favor of a more relatable portrayal. Sporting sharp survival instincts—and realistic proportions—*Tomb Raider's* protagonist is afraid and fighting for her life. Our latest look reveals more of this scared, stranded girl, but also gives us a glimpse at the brave heroine she becomes.

The preview picks up shortly after the events of the previous presentation, in which Lara escaped a cocoon-like prison, outran a cave-dwelling madman, and savagely slew a wolf. Still displaying the emotional and physical scars of those encounters, Lara's looking for fellow survivors of her shipwreck. Clutching a wound, she peers over a cliff to spot a lifeboat along the island's coast. Hopeful it's a sign her friends aren't splayed on the jagged rocks below, she continues searching.

Recalling Lara's agility of old, she crosses a precarious log, then scales a crashed plane that's pinned vertically against a waterfall. As the craft begins breaking apart, Lara barely drops to safety. Discovering a backpack belonging to her friend Sam convinces her to push onward, but her path's broken by a gaping chasm; her resulting leap of faith ends in a nasty fall to the forest below.

Spark of Life

Injured, hungry, and shivering from the soaking rain, Lara attempts to build a fire with a single match from the pack. Despite the absence of any Nathan Drake-style dramatics, the scene packs plenty of emotional intensity—we actually exhale in relief when she succeeds in lighting the fire.

Things resume the next morning, with Lara somewhat refreshed and ready to carry on. Walking through the wilderness, she stumbles upon the unsettling sight of a hanging corpse. It's not *all* swarming flies and rotting flesh, however, as she spies a bow on the victim. After acquiring the weapon, she uses it to hunt a deer; as she gruesomely guts the stag with an arrow, she mutters "sorry" to the animal, and we're again moved by the character's humanity.

Preparing her venison feast back at ▸▸

Quick Pitch

Survive or Die

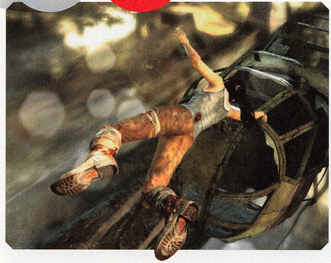
Food and shelter trump treasures and artifacts.

Fight to Live

Lara's signature pistols are traded for anything she can get her desperate hands on; bows and pickaxes quickly become her best friends.

Insane Inhabitants

On top of harsh elements and hungry wildlife, Lara must battle crazed island dwellers.



Unlike the tropical, sun-baked settings of games like *Far Cry 3*, *Tomb Raider's* harsh island environment is no place we'd take the tykes on vacation.

Details are scant, but Lara's island seems to be populated by people that like to make shrines. Nice use of candles!

camp, Lara hears a friend's voice on a radio she finds in the backpack. Reacting to the terrified voice, she resumes her search. Before long, Lara happens on a small hut housing a hidden passage beneath its floor. Learning the hard way that this subterranean secret holds little more than waist-deep water, skull-laden shrines, and slabs of rotting meat, she grabs a pickaxe and runs.

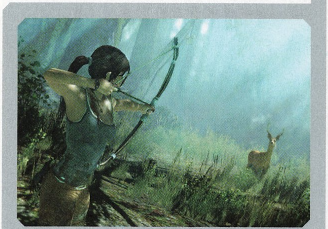
Upon exiting the tunnel of terror, Lara finds Sam, who's just chillin' in the woods, chatting up a stranger. The seemingly friendly chap invites both girls to follow him, but pulls a blade on Sam and drags her into the woods when his offer's declined. Lara gives chase. but is thwarted by the jaws of a bear trap; as if things couldn't get worse, a pack of wolves takes advantage of her predicament. Grabbing her bow, she manages to down the beasts.

Kill or Be Killed

Lara's luck finally turns as some of her fellow survivors happen upon her and shoot off the trap. She stays with one member of the group while the rest track Sam. On their way to camp, the pair discover an ornately decorated temple door. Breaching the passage introduces a puzzle familiar to the franchise, requiring both Lara and her A.I. partner to simultaneously turn cranks to raise the obstruction.

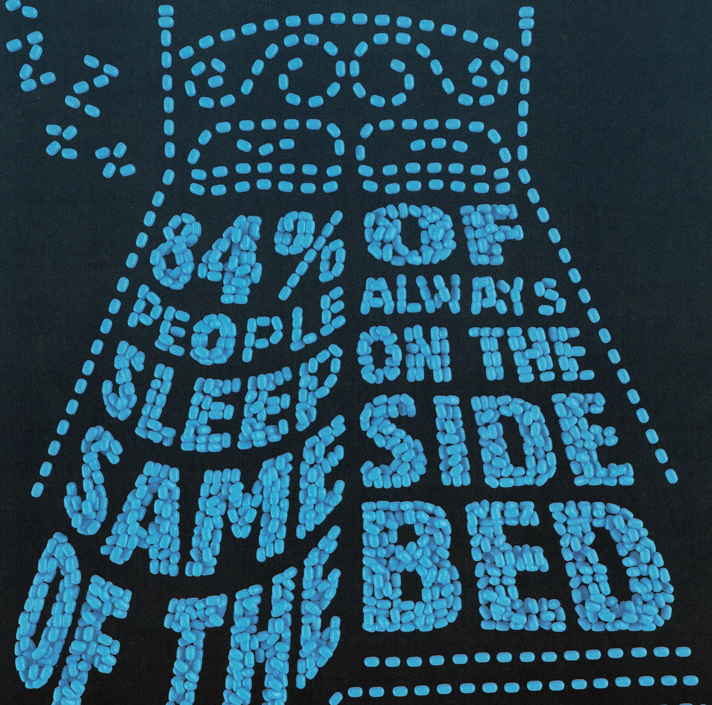
They enter the scary structure, but are quickly captured by thugs who look like close acquaintances of the jungle hobo that took Sam. Turns out these island crazies have also secured Lara's other mates. Following a "Kill them all!" command from the enemy's leader, all hell breaks loose. Lara and her fellow abductees flee, and shots are fired. A bound Lara finds a hiding place, but her safety's short-lived.

She's discovered by one of the creepy kidnappers, shifting the game into a QTE. During a desperate struggle, Lara knees and bites her captor, before blowing his brains out with his own pistol. A shot of a visibly shaken Lara closes the demo. **MATT CABRAL**



Survival Skills

Lara can collect salvage to upgrade weapons and gear back at camp. Her axe, for example, needs to be tweaked in order to tackle a crank-turning puzzle. Lara's abilities can also be boosted; during our demo, she acquires a skill allowing her to pluck and reuse arrows from downed prey.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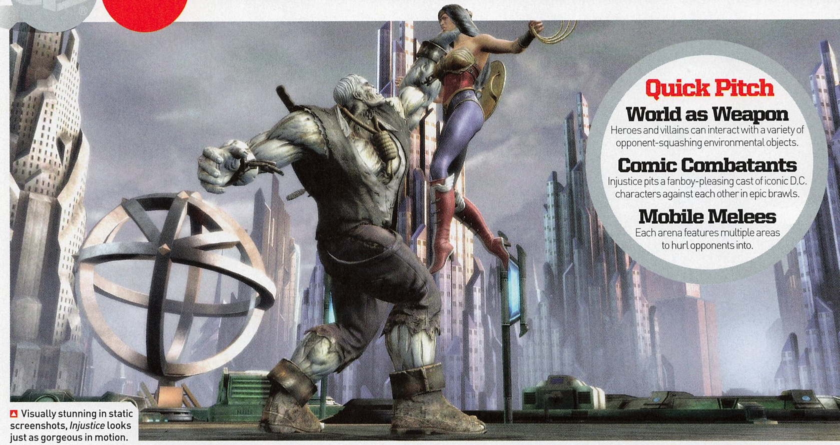


Quick Pitch

World as Weapon
Heroes and villains can interact with a variety of opponent-squashing environmental objects.

Comic Combatants
Injustice pits a fanboy-pleasing cast of iconic D.C. characters against each other in epic brawls.

Mobile Melees
Each arena features multiple areas to hurl opponents into.

▲ Visually stunning in static screenshots, *Injustice* looks just as gorgeous in motion.

FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **TBD 2013** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **NetherRealm Studios**

Injustice Gods Among Us

Superhero smackdown

Before beginning a demo of his upcoming comic book-inspired brawler *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, *Mortal Kombat* co-creator Ed Boon states his team at NetherRealm Studios is setting out to make the "biggest, blockbuster-sized, massive-destruction, epic-scale fighting game." This sounds like an ambitious, but unattainable goal...until we hear who Boon has in his corner.

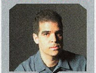
Featuring such iconic ass-kickers as Superman, Wonder Woman, and Batman, *Injustice's* roster could even give even *Marvel vs. Capcom's* spandex-clad cast a run for their money. More than boasting about the famous fighters, however, Boon's on hand to show what else this fighter has tucked into its utility belt.

Sporting stunning visuals, our demo opens with the Man of Steel and Solomon Grundy duking it out in the Batcave. While their melee includes the expected face-pummeling action and even some signature powers, such as Supes' heat vision, Boon's anxious to show how the arena can be turned into a weapon. A character crashing into the Batcave's wall of cool gadgets and gear, for example, leads to grenades spilling onto the floor; Superman then retrieves the explosives and feeds them to Grundy. Even cooler, the undead supervillain responds by using a nearby control panel to fire rockets from the Batmobile. Upon tearing Bats' home base a new one, Boon points out that these interactive items will react differently depending on which character triggers them.

The second half of our demo—showcasing an epic bout between Batman and Wonder Woman—builds on the features we saw in the previous fight, but also focuses on the title's multi-layered arenas. Each playing field's made up of a number of areas, and smashing opponents back and forth between them looks like a literal blast. Following a few minutes of the Bat and Wonder Woman toying with each other on the streets of a futuristic city, Bruce Wayne's alter ego decides to chuck the star-spangled heroine through a wall. The resulting hurl, however, actually sends her atop a building two blocks away; best of all, we witness—in cinematic detail—every crunching contact she makes with wood, concrete, steel, and glass along the way.

From full character rosters and what specific powers they'll possess, to gameplay mechanics and modes, there's still lots to learn about *Injustice*. But based on our promising peek, we can't wait to don the capes and cowls of our DC heroes and villains. More than that, though, we look forward to seeing Bruce Wayne's reaction when he returns to the Batcave after Grundy and Supes' shenanigans. **MATT CABRAL**

Dev Talk



"One of our goals is to introduce new features that haven't been done in the fighting genre before and move it forward, while also maintaining these iconic characters from the DC Universe... we're going for a very realistic look, as well as a diverse cast of characters."

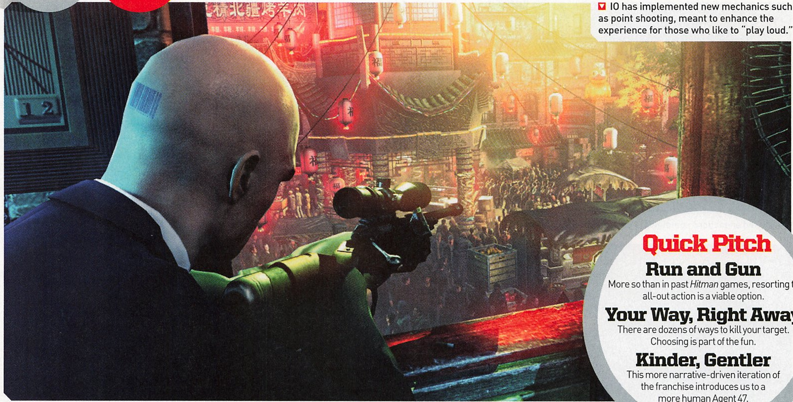
Ed Boon
Creative Director,
NetherRealm Studios

Detailed animations complement each character's traits.

Despite its T rating, *Injustice* promises plenty of violence.

Battle environments realistically erode over time based on how the brawlers interact with them.

Each hero sports enhanced versions of their signature moves.



IO has implemented new mechanics such as point shooting, meant to enhance the experience for those who like to "play loud."

Quick Pitch

Run and Gun
More so than in past *Hitman* games, resorting to all-out action is a viable option.

Your Way, Right Away
There are dozens of ways to kill your target. Choosing is part of the fun.

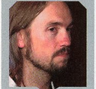
Kinder, Gentler
This more narrative-driven iteration of the franchise introduces us to a more human Agent 47.

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **November** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **IO Interactive**

Hitman: Absolution

Just the hits, man

Dev Talk



"On the character side, we are using 3D scanning to get a high realism to the characters, but we are still deliberately keeping the look slightly less realistic as we believe it adds more emotion to the game. We also have a lot of post editing tools to modify and enhance the image (for color correction, lens effects and similar) that we use to give the game a more cinematic look."
Tore Blystad
Game Director

It's a subtle thing, but with the newest entry in the *Hitman* series, developer IO Interactive has gone for something a bit different from previous titles. Agent 47 remains a super assassin capable of forging a weapon from pocket lint and a baby diaper, but that's where the similarities end: "We wanted 47 to be a far more empowered character, where killing is easy, but getting away with it is the hard part," says IO game director Tore Blystad. "Being a hired assassin, he has often been ordered around in past games, but in *Absolution* it's 47 that is calling the shots and at the center of the story." The idea is that this brings more drama to the experience, driving the story forward with the player and Agent 47 writing their own mission briefing, so to speak.

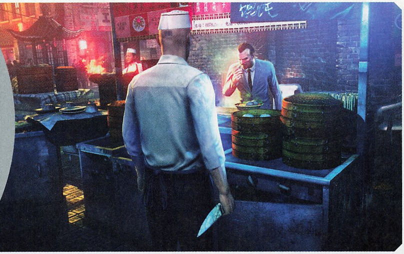
Our time with the game takes place during a mission called "King of Chinatown." Street vendors hawk their goods, shopkeepers tend to their storefronts, and the scene has all the bustle of a sunny weekend afternoon in the city. The assassination target for this mission is a mustachioed drug kingpin who sits in a rotunda, surrounded by bodyguards, smoking cigarettes and generally looking seedy (as drug kingpins will).

Safety in Numbers

Perhaps the most impressive thing about the scene is the crowd itself, with its throngs of pedestrians crammed up against one another, pushing past each other with believable motion and collision detection. Some wait in lines for food, others peruse cheap goods, still others dawdle about and people-watch. It might seem like ornamentation, but in a game about assassination—often in the context of large crowds of people, amongst whom you must blend in order to avoid capture—it has become central to *Absolution's* core mission.

"The crowd system is something that got introduced in *Hitman: Blood Money* to create memorable levels," says Blystad. "It was impressive in numbers, but it didn't really have any gameplay relevance." Not the case with *Absolution*: the key here is the crowd's ability to act as a group, which makes for plenty of high drama. The crowd conceals us from our pursuers, but should we start a fight—or fire a gun, or detonate a bomb—we can easily start a mass panic. "It has been, and still is, one of the most difficult features to get right in the game, since the believability in animation and character variation is very easy to spot for anyone, and we're quite limited by memory constraints," says Blystad.

To get it right, the team developed more dynamic AI that could move in and out of combat scenarios with grace, and enable NPCs to make their own decisions rather than being told what to do. "The key design philosophy is that the player should always have the choice to play it how he wants to," continues Blystad. "This adds a massive burden on



Agent 47 isn't the only one being humanized. "We want the player to spend a lot of time with our NPC's, so we do our best to give them interesting stories to tell," says Blystad.

The crowd conceals us from pursuers, but should we start a fight or fire a gun, we can easily start a mass panic.

the team, as it means that we have to cater for any situation at any given time, and we can't rely on scripting and trigger boxing for the gameplay, which most other games do."

Visually, *Absolution* looks significantly better than any of the series' previous entries, which is most immediately noticeable in the realistic animation of its characters. When a lower-rung drug dealer is admonished and told to return to our target with a bundle of cocaine, his natural swagger is undermined by his lack of choice in the matter. Likewise, the team created an entirely new renderer based around the game's art direction, which employs dramatic style and lighting, with shadows playing a key role. The game can be played very slowly, and as such the team added environmental detail everywhere the player can possibly get to. "We have very high demands of our environment artists, and the goal is that every room and even every prop is telling a story and adding something unique to the game," says Blystad.

Our choice for ending the mission—chosen from literally dozens of potential assassination scenarios—is satisfying. We follow the dealer to his stash as he heads to procure the drugs for his boss. A swift neck-snap puts him out, and we disguise ourselves in his clothing (which fits perfectly!). We head back to meet up with the boss, who follows us to a dark alley for the pass-off—which never comes. Two shots to the head, a quick look-around to make sure nobody saw us, and then we're gone like the wind. A mighty, violent wind. EVAN SHAMOON

Views to a Kill Five possible options for creative murder

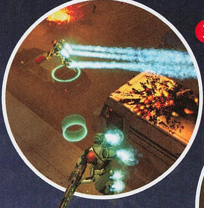
Car bomb A remote charge placed inside the target's expensive vehicle takes care of business, provided your detonation timing is right.

Leaky faucet When the target relieves himself, the last thing he'll be thinking about is the construction platform full of corn sacks hanging above him.

Sniper! There's a sniper rifle stashed in a room overlooking the marketplace. Find it, place your shot, and get the hell out of there.

Fugu Words will never hurt you, but poison certainly will. Add this to your target's food or drink and he'll be fugged before he knows it.

Guns Blazing It's neither the easiest nor most professional way to go, but pure gunplay can get the job done. Just don't forget to account for SWAT.



1 Like the 1994 original, *XCOM* features turn-based combat with a heavy emphasis on cover. Unlike the original, it also has jetpacks.

2 Between missions, players head back to base to promote soldiers, research alien tech (like jetpacks), manage resources, and generally decide the fate of all mankind.

3 *XCOM's* signature little gray men, Sectoids are just a tease of the game's far more menacing threats—like this leggy whatever-it-is thingy.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **2K Games** Dev **Firaxis Games**

XCOM
Enemy Unknown

The controls behind the commander

Since its reveal, we've been intrigued by the prospect of playing *XCOM: Enemy Unknown*—a re-imagining of the 1994 PC strategy hit—on our PS3s. Its "stylized realism" presentation and aliens-occupy-Earth concept had already grabbed our attention, but the *real* test would come with controlling the mouse-and-keyboard classic behind a DualShock.

Unfolding in Germany, where an alien attack has left burning buildings, overturned vehicles, and disemboweled civilians in its wake, our demo wastes no time getting us through the basics. Commanding a quartet of soldiers, we first learn to navigate cover; moving the left stick nudges a cursor around the map, while tapping X sends the selected squad member to the chosen point. A small shield icon then displays how well they're protected; since the action is turn-based, making sure they have decent cover before the alien side starts attacking is essential.

Using this mechanic to inch our way through hostile territory, we eventually infiltrate a warehouse occupied by Sectoids, the series' signature extraterrestrial evildoers. Once inside, we're introduced to the tactical combat interface. Pulling R2 displays a menu of attack options, such as the ability to fire weapons and lob grenades. We do both after discovering that a mind-controlling Sectoid has turned an ally into a suicide bomber.

Following some explosive exchanges—resulting in plenty of spilled human blood and alien green goo—we complete the mission with a single squaddie left standing. Strategy tends to be a hit-or-miss genre on consoles, but our taste of *XCOM*'s intuitive mechanics promises we'll be focusing on thoughtful strategy, rather than fumbling with overcomplicated controls, when we next meet its alien uglies. **MATT CABRAL**

The gunplay isn't quite *Max Payne*, but the "aggressive-cover" shooting system places a heavy emphasis on diving and vaulting.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **August** Pub **Square Enix** Dev **United Front Games**

Sleeping Dogs

Back to Square one

Square Enix's *Sleeping Dogs* (formerly Activision's *True Crime: Hong Kong*) has returned to where it started. When developer United Front Games started work on the concept, it seems, it was actually much closer to its current state than to a *True Crime* title.

"We created this IP from scratch, and Activision later attached the *True Crime* brand," says UFG lead producer Jeff O'Connell. "Working with Square-Enix has allowed us to refocus on what we originally envisioned for the game, and that's been an incredibly rewarding experience." Square-Enix's London Studios, which has several sprawling open-world titles under its belt, helped the team refine its systems. "We worked together to add a layer of polish, and get to a clarity that wasn't there before."

Perhaps the most prominent thing about Sleeping Dogs is just how much it attempts to do well. There's kung fu, cover-based shooting, and driving, the latter involving 65 vehicles ranging from cars to motorcycles to boats. There's karaoke singing, street racing, a fight club, and gambling minigames ranging from dominoes to cockfighting. "We assembled a team at UFG who we believed could deliver on that variety, and we feel we've met that goal," says O'Connell.

Empty your clip into one guy, ditch the gun and throw another guy into a table saw. Run into and tackle a third, and throw him over a railing; pick up his dropped knife and swivel around to take on three guys at once. Bash your opponent's head into a phone booth (which apparently still exist, at least in Hong Kong), and then seal the deal by repeatedly hitting him with the receiver. Car doors, fire extinguishers, meat cleavers, and dance floors all become weapons, along with various other pieces of the environment.

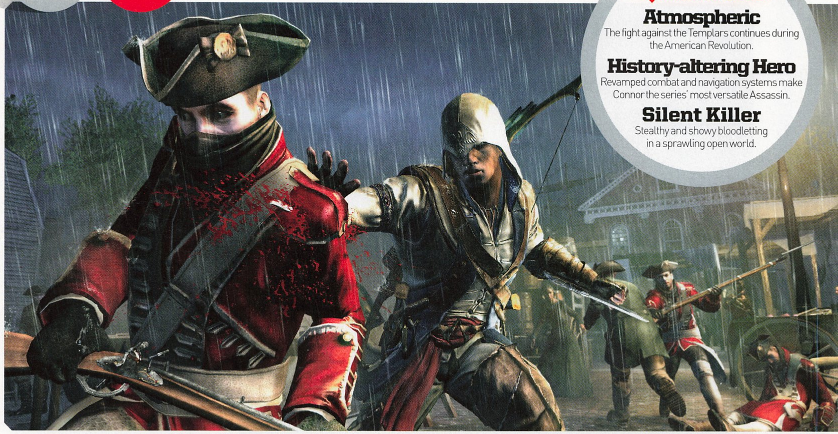
Sleeping Dogs' inspiration comes primarily from Hong Kong cinema.

"Hong Kong is in many ways the ideal sandbox for an action-packed, cop-centric open world game," says O'Connell. "There aren't many other cities in the world that can stand toe-to-toe with Hong Kong in terms of an 'action' pedigree: HK is the home of Bruce Lee and John Woo, and has a real-life history of cop-and-triad warfare." **EVAN SHAMOON**

Dev Talk

"It sounds corny to say it, but making an open world is hard. There's a real sense of cause and effect here when you tinker with making a non-linear world. One change can cascade across the rest of the game. It's tough, but incredibly rewarding—we're now at the point where we're seeing changes, and the layers of polish have a really noticeable impact on the game."

Jeff O'Connell
Lead Producer



Quick Pitch

Atmospheric
The fight against the Templars continues during the American Revolution.

History-altering Hero
Revamped combat and navigation systems make Connor the series' most versatile Assassin.

Silent Killer
Stealthy and showy bloodletting in a sprawling open world.

UPDATE Format **PS3** ETA **October** Pub **Ubisoft** Dev **Ubisoft Montreal**

Assassin's Creed III

Hunting wildlife...and Redcoats

Unlike our previous look at *Assassin's Creed III*, our latest glimpse doesn't kick off with the title's half-European, half-Native American protagonist slaying Redcoats during a history-shaping melee or battling black bears in the wilderness. Instead, it begins peacefully enough, with Connor quietly hunting in the beautiful, snow-blanketed frontier.

Of course, dropping a buck with his bow and arrow before unleashing a bullets-and-blades ballet on a pack of wolves is merely a warm-up for the white-cloaked killer. Upon delivering his fresh kill to an American camp's butcher, Connor accepts an assassination mission, hops on a horse, and heads toward Fort Mathieu, where an unlucky chap named Silas unknowingly awaits his early demise.

As he closes in on the enemy encampment, the blade-brandishing Assassin dismounts his steed and stealthily approaches a group of British guards. He grabs their attention by stringing one up with rope dart; as menacing as it sounds, the death-dealer leaves its harpooned victim unceremoniously dangling from a tree limb. The Brits react by raising their muskets, but Connor acquires a human shield before they can fire. While the soldiers frantically attempt to reload, the nimble killer—showcasing a brutal two-handed combat style—carves through them in a dynamic display of crushed skulls, slit throats, and lopped limbs.

Fire and Steel

After sharpening his tomahawk on the cranium of the one soldier who had the good sense to run away (apparently British army boots weren't built for swift snow traversal), Connor gracefully navigates a series of cliff faces and trees to get the drop on his target. The game shifts to a quick cut of the clueless mark, who sits sipping tea as he confidently overlooks his army from a tower. Clearly outnumbered by the British forces, our hero scans the environment for a little help. At this point, ACIII's creative director, Alex Hutchinson, points out a pile of black-powder kegs—or, as he playfully refers to them, "a very early exploding barrel."

Igniting the explosives from afar, Connor singlehandedly unleashes hell, sending the troops—many engulfed in flames—into a state of utter chaos. Sporting the same fluid animations we've seen displayed during his previous bouts with human and animal adversaries, Connor runs through the camp, seamlessly slaying attackers even as he sprints. Silas attempts to flee, but Connor, who's grabbed a bayonet-equipped rifle from a weapon rack, catches up to him. We won't spoil the demo's dramatic conclusion, but let's just say that Silas won't be enjoying teatime ever again. **MATT CABRAL**

Dev Talk

"I believe we have the most robust character, in terms of third-person navigation, in the business. We've integrated sliding, cliff and tree navigation...all of it takes place not only in an open world, but across organic shapes. None of the surfaces are straight, all are unusual ,and Connor navigates them with relative ease."

Alex Hutchinson
Creative Director,
Ubisoft Montreal

Connor's animations are some of the most organic we've ever seen.

ACIII's hunting system goes far beyond killing for sport.

While our demo features a stealthy approach to the fort, at least two other strategies will be available.

The story of Ratonhnhaké:ton (we'll just call him Connor) and his place in the Assassin-Templar war drives the narrative.

▲ Orange blood: a sure sign you're either playing *Lost Planet*, or your TV's on the way out.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Spring 2013** Pub **Capcom** Dev **Capcom/Spark Unlimited**

Lost Planet 3

Mechs, icicles, drills, thespians

Well, this is odd. Who'd have guessed a year ago that the *Dead Space* (revealed on p.8) and *Lost Planet* franchises would be treading such similar snowy, survival-horror territory? Odder still, *Lost Planet 3* is showing genuine potential to be something other than painfully average.

The game boasts survival-focused, open-world gameplay on—well, let's just call it Hoth, because there's precious little on the snowy planet to break that illusion. It also boasts an upgradable mech, which feels substantial and comforting to stomp around in and drill Akrids with. Given what's out there, we don't think we're going to want to stray too far from the safety of our mech-like vehicle.

But what we weren't prepared for is the quality of the character performances. Facial animations are almost (but not quite) on par with *LA Noire*, and the voice-acting performances of the lead character and his dorky technician friend are human and affecting—no gruff "badass" quipping, just character-fleshing dialogue that helps us give a yeti's hairball about them. It's a genuine shock from a series that's previously been about flimsy arcade shooting.

Now there's the problem—bringing back the underwhelmed deserters of previous *Lost Planet* campaigns. Us? We can't *wait* to hop back into the giganto-mech and get stomping—previous games be damned. **JAMES COATES**

▲ All creatures, great and small, want to hurt you. *LP3's* bosses look to go bigger than ever.

▲ A good rule of thumb: if a spot on a monster is glowing, that's probably where bullets should go.

HANDS-ON Format **PS3** ETA **Fall** Pub **Konami** Dev **PES Productions**

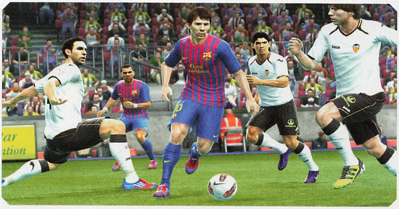
Pro Evolution Soccer 2013

Working on the fundamentals

Like a coach on the first day of practice, the developers of *Pro Evolution Soccer 2013* are concentrating on improving their game's basics. New passing and shooting mechanics will let us do both in any direction, and with more subtlety and control. There'll also be similar improvements to the ball handling, as well as a fighting game-like special-move system that will, for example, let players run the ball around opposing players or carefully lob it over the goalie's head, all with the help of different button combinations.

The devs are also improving the A.I., which will affect how the opposing team responds to certain situations, letting them move both individually and as a team to take up better defensive positions against us. In addition, between 40 and 50 pro players—including Bayern Munich's Arjen Robben, Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo, and FC Barcelona's Xavi—will now have such individual characteristics as their stamina, shot accuracy and even passing style built into the game..

As we took to the field in a match that pitted Real Madrid against CR Flamengo, it was obvious that these changes make passing more fluid and intuitive, although executing the button combinations needed to score a goal took as much practice as a *Mortal Kombat* Fatality. Thankfully, the dev team's still hard at work, as evidenced by plans for similar (albeit not-yet-detailed) improvements to the online modes. **PAUL SEMEL**



▲ Adding special moves to soccer means more ball control than before.

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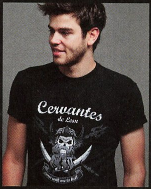

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Graeme Boyd, Xbox

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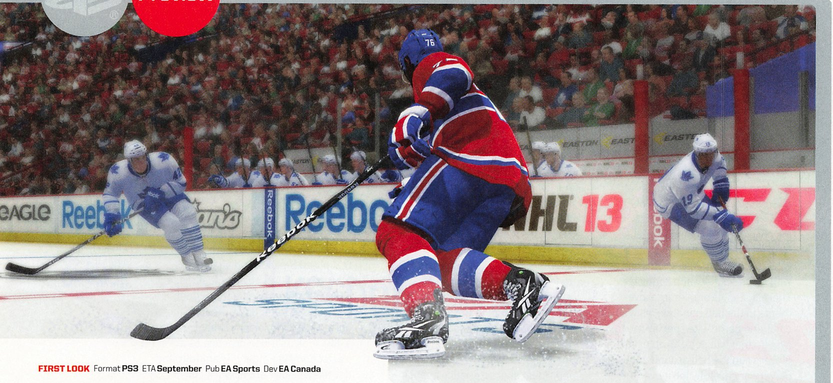
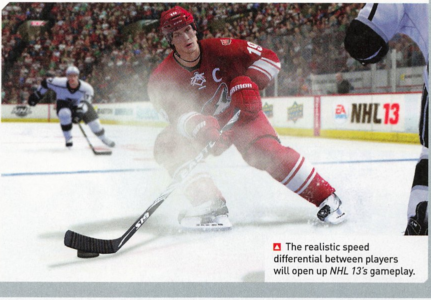


FIRST LOOK Format **PS3** ETA **September** Pub **EA Sports** Dev **EA Canada**

NHL 13

Exhibiting breakaway speed

A perennial top-tier sports game, it's easy to dismiss the *NHL* franchise's annual evolutionary upgrades. But this year's additions—True Performance Skating and EA Sports Hockey I.Q.—promise to add the sort of gameplay enhancements that hardcore sports gamers covet. True Performance Skating reflects the difference in explosiveness, top speed, and momentum between real-world players—hulking, backward-skating defensemen will no longer be able to keep pace with quick goal attackers. The Hockey I.Q. system looks to improve team A.I. by expanding situational awareness beyond the puck possessor. It's a feature set that should make the fastest game on ice even slicker. **ROGER BURCHILL**

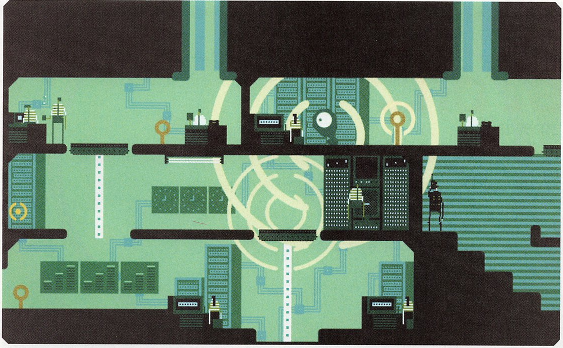


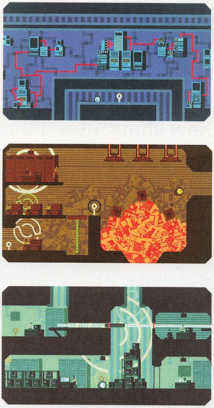
▲ The realistic speed differential between players will open up *NHL 13's* gameplay.

HANDS-ON Format **PSN** ETA **Summer** Pub **XSEED** Dev **Acquire**

Way of the Samurai 4

As a series, *Way of the Samurai* has always been more than a little goofy—although its open-ended storylines usually take a serious (if heavily stylized) approach to samurai drama. Not this time. Headed straight to PSN, *Way of the Samurai 4* is an unabashedly bizarre adventure, set in a version of 19th-century Edo where teenage girls are high-ranking diplomats, British marines sport golden armor, and wandering samurai make dates with women that involve creeping into their homes at night for slapstick stealth-seduction minigames.





▲ Touchscreen controls make constructing our own beat-driven levels easy.

HANDS-ON Format **PS Vita** ETA **TBD** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Queasy Games**

Sound Shapes

Listen, jump, create

At first, *Sound Shapes* doesn't seem like a whole lot more than a really solid platformer. It takes a second to notice exactly what's happening; every object we successfully interact with adds to the wonderful soundtrack that we're building as we play. As levels progress, the music builds and builds, resulting in a truly fabulous musical platformer experience.

If we're feeling creative, we can take to the level editor and work out any musical impulses with a simple but flexible interface. With just a few minutes of experimentation (and minimal musical talent), we were able to slap together a little level that didn't sound half bad. It wasn't nearly as polished or amazing-sounding as the campaign's prefab levels, but it hints at what more talented and experienced hands than our own will be able to accomplish.

It works like this: With each new level, we're given a grid, and a slew of level elements to place on that grid. Depending on the order and placement of the elements, a different note, drum beat, or sound is played. As we're creating, the editor lets us see and hear how it'll play, giving us a constant preview of our work. If we like what we hear, we can export it for the community to play and vote on. With the tons of player-created content that's sure to come from *Sound Shapes*, it's hard to imagine putting it down. **TAYLOR COCKE**

Musical Guests

Super-popular house artist deadmau5 will make a celebrity appearance in *Sound Shapes*...sort of. He contributed music that has been matched up with a Queasy-designed level, which takes on a decidedly retro feeling, matching the producer's signature sound with sprites and other gaming throwbacks.

Weird as it is, *Way of the Samurai 4's* freely explorable clockwork world and choose-your-own-adventure plot manage to be interesting in spite of the dated graphics, melodramatic dialogue, and slightly awkward (but fun and varied) swordplay. Will we become an agent for the foreigners or help a xenophobic militia kick them out of Japan? Should we lend our skills to the local police force or start doing jobs for Edo's criminals? And just how far will we get if we interrupt a pompous official's dramatic speech with repeated catcalls or a drawn sword?

Answering questions like these has always been a big part of the series' fun, as well as its near-endless replayability—and whatever *Way of the Samurai 4's* idiosyncrasies, the lure of a story and characters that respond to our decisions is strong enough to make us want to dive in. **MIKEL REPARAZ**

Weapons of Choice

Soul Sacrifice (SCE JAPAN STUDIO)

Former Capcom dev legend Keiji Inafune's new Vita RPG features self-mutilating spells, none so flashy as the one where the hero turns his own spine into a sword.

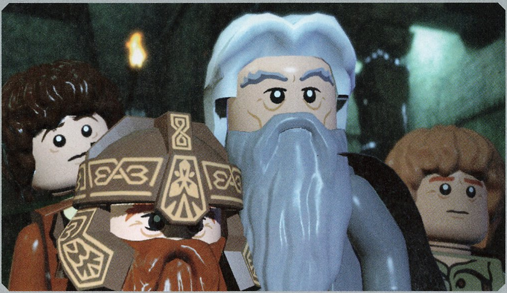
The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info

LEGO The Lord of the Rings

Format **PS3** ETA **TBD** Pub **Warner Bros. Interactive Ent.** Dev **TT Games**

With the brick playset series already in stores, it comes as little surprise that *The Lord of the Rings* is next in line for the *LEGO* videogame treatment. While the game will cover the entire story trilogy, our early look occurred at Balin's tomb in the Mines of Moria, where Pippin inadvertently dislodges a skeleton that rattles down a well. Orcs soon arrive with a cave troll in tow, and the scene moves from a typically charming *LEGO* cutscene into familiar brick-smashing gameplay. One difference: five party members can be onscreen at once, although only two are playable, with the other three assisting.



SAINTS FLOW

Saints Row: The Third – Enter the Dominatrix

Format **PSN** ETA **Q3** Pub **THQ** Dev **Volition**

Picking up immediately after *The Third* leaves off, *Enter the Dominatrix* gives players what they've always wanted: Aliens and superpowers. We honestly don't know what else *Saints Row* can do to amaze us.

Damage Inc. Pacific Squadron WWII

Format **PS3** ETA **August** Pub **Mad Catz** Dev **Trickstar Games**

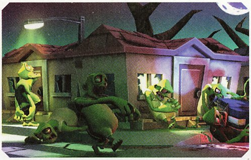
Compatible and available as a bundle with Mad Catz's Pacific AV8R flightstick, *Damage Inc.* is an arcadey WWII flight sim that features 23 missions, more than 100 mission objectives, and several multiplayer modes.

WEAK
955
ATTACK
サイクロン
OVER CHAIN

Conception: Please Have My Babies

Format **PSP** ETA **TBD** Pub **TBD** Dev **Spike Chunsoft**

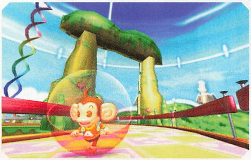
We wish we could say this isn't real. *Conception* is a dungeon crawler RPG about getting women pregnant and making their kids fight demons. We're sure there's more to it, but we're pretty stuck on that part.



Zombie Tycoon 2: Brainhov's Revenge

Format **PS3/PS Vita** ETA **2013** Pub/Dev **Frima Studios**

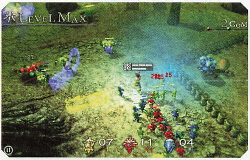
The zombie RTS is back with familiar faces and even more goofy undead. With both slow zombies and ultra-quick zombies, we'll have to pick our strategies carefully. *Zombie Tycoon 2* will allow crossplay between Vita and PS3.



Super Monkey Ball: Banana Splitz

Format **PS Vita** ETA **October** Pub **Sega** Dev **Sega**

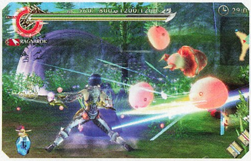
Super Monkey Ball will be bringing its simian goodness to Vita with over one hundred puzzle stages and eight familiar minigames. Tilt the Vita to manipulate the puzzles and use its camera to create custom stages.



Orgarhythm

Format **PS Vita** ETA **TBD** Pub **XSEED Games** Dev **Acquire**

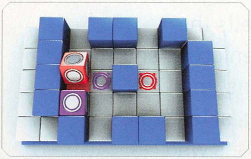
Combining real-time strategy and rhythm-based gameplay sounds a little weird, but tapping our God of Light to the beat and sending out minions to destroy our enemies is simple and fun—making *Orgarhythm* unique enough to capture our attention.



Ragnarok Odyssey

Format **PS Vita** ETA **Q3** Pub **XSEED Games** Dev **Game Arts**

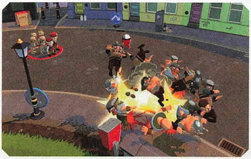
A *Monster Hunter*-esque spinoff of PC MMORPG *Ragnarok Online, Odyssey* lets up to four players team up to chase down monsters, loot, and increasingly powerful gear through hundreds of diverse, fast-paced hunting missions.



Smart As

Format **PS Vita** ETA **Fall** Pub **SCEA** Dev **XDev Europe**

A collection of 20 brainteaser-type minigames, *Smart As* challenges us to prove our logic, arithmetic, language, and observational skills. Slick NEAR implementation means we can challenge other Vita owners on the go.



When Vikings Attack

Format **PSN** ETA **Fall** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Clever Beans / XDev Europe**

This PS3/Vita crossplayable download initially seems too simplistic to be fun; we vanquish invading Vikings by tossing any item in sight. But the single-player quest and multiplayer co-op and versus modes kept us coming back for more.

Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ NFS: The Movie

DreamWorks has acquired the rights to make a *Need for Speed* movie. The writer of *Real Steel* is working on the story.

▲ Colossal News

Chronicle director Josh Trank has signed on to make a *Shadow of the Colossus* movie.

▲ Make it Mech

The Mechromancer—a new *Borderlands 2* class—will be available after the game releases.

▼ Hold, Please

BioShock Infinite and *Tomb Raider* have both been delayed until early 2013.

▼ Losing Hope

THQ is looking to sell third-person shooter *Devil's Third*. If no buyer is found, there's a good chance it will be cancelled.

▼ Panic in Paradise

There's actually going to be a sequel to *Naughty Bear*. Why?

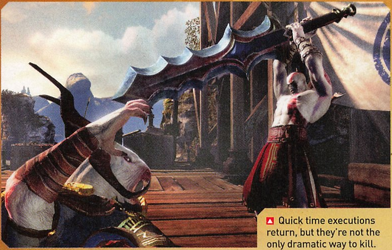
Sins of the Father

By Mikel Reparaz

The Kratos of *God of War: Ascension* is a little different from the hulking rage-demon we've come to know and love over the series' seven-year history. Beginning just six months after Kratos was tricked into murdering his own wife and daughter, *Ascension* tells the story of how he became Olympus' enforcer, and gives us a Kratos that's younger, thinner, and less consumed by an obsessive thirst for vengeance. For the time being, at least, he has a bigger problem. The Furies—avenging goddesses who specialize in hounding those who murder their own families—are on his trail and intent on his destruction.

They have *no idea* what they're up against. ▶▶

Format **PS3** ETA **2013** Pub **SCEA** Dev **Santa Monica Studios**



△ Quick time executions return, but they're not the only dramatic way to kill.

For now, the bald engine of death stands on a dock at the shores of the isle of Delos. Our eyes immediately fixate on the horizon, where the foot of a massive, under-construction stone colossus rises out of sight atop a seaside cliff, surrounded by an enormous scaffold—but Todd Papy, *Ascension's* director, quickly pulls our attention back to Kratos himself.

"If you put him next to *God of War III* Kratos, *God of War III* Kratos looks rather puffy," Papy says of the new, leaner look. "He was just so built up, and so muscular, so we thinned him out a little bit more. You can also see the new garb on his model. So you'll see new skirts, new handwraps, new blades, new boots—basically everything."

This will also be a Kratos with more of his humanity intact; still brutal and ambitious, but less of a "rage-fueled beast," says Papy. "It's not that Kratos is going to go pick flowers and go hug people all the time," he says, but where the older Kratos had a tendency to murder any hapless civilians who got in his way (for example), this one might simply push them to the side.

"In [the first] *God of War*, you can see some of the human element that's still in him," says Papy, who adds that *God of War II* and *III* stripped much of that away. "In certain movies, it almost looked like he was crying or his eyes were tearing up. Sort of a 'What have I done? What have I become?' kind of thing. Being able to show that other side of him, and showing remorse... That's kind of the idea behind it. How does he deal with those issues, and how does he break free?"

Brute Fury

As Kratos advances down the dock, a man crawls toward us, groaning, a giant sword embedded in his back. As he collapses, a group of satyrs—rendered here as goat-headed creatures that Papy tells us will be *Ascension's* new grunts—emerge slowly from the scaffold behind him. As the man expires, Kratos casually yanks the sword from his back and strides toward his enemies.

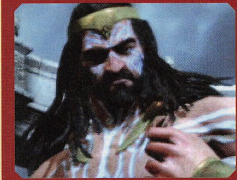
The satyrs are quick and capable of wielding different weapons, but the same can be said for Kratos, who begins slicing into his foes with alternating strikes from the chain-tethered Blades of Chaos and his new sword. Sub-weapons have always been problematic in *God of War* games, in that they're never quite as much fun to use as the default blades, but *Ascension* addresses the issue by turning its secondary weapons into five semi-disposable tools, which Kratos can pick up throughout the world, carry one at a time, and use to supplement his regular chain-attack combos. The sub-weapons can also help put

PICK YOUR PATRON

Choosing a divine allegiance in multiplayer is about more than just having an angry god to watch our backs. Like classes in other multiplayer games, each imparts different abilities in the arena, and each is suited to a distinct play style.

Ares

Tanks, brawlers, and those who specialize in dishing out heavy damage up close will want to ally themselves with the diabolical god of war, whose focus is on strong melee attacks and combos.

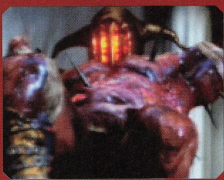


Poseidon

The closest thing to a kind, gentle deity that multiplayer offers, the sea god favors team players, blessing his followers with healing and other abilities that fit well with a support-oriented style.

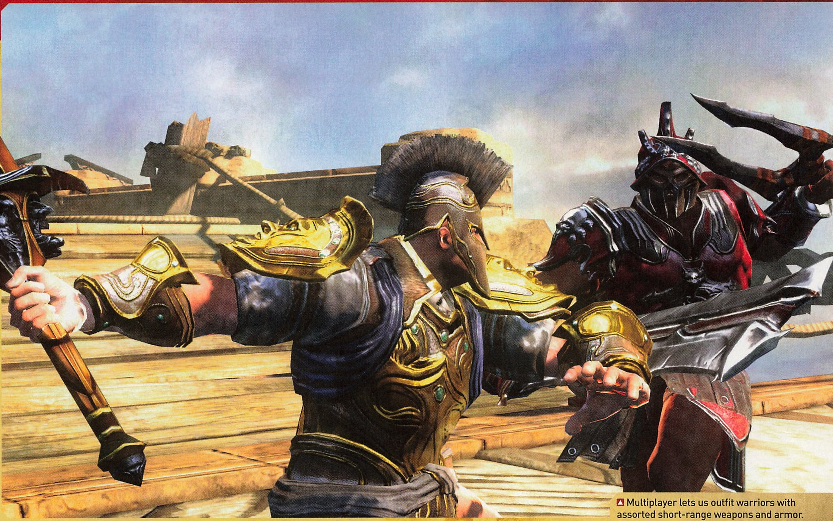
Zeus

Those who prefer to attack from a distance with magic will want to consider an allegiance with Zeus, as the thunder god's champions can teleport, form magical shields, and hurl energy projectiles.



Hades

Unlike his relatives, Hades dabbles in all combat disciplines—magic, support, and brawling are all open to his chosen warriors. And if that's not enough, the underworld god also offers the ability to set traps and turn invisible.



Multiplayer lets us outfit warriors with assorted short-range weapons and armor.

Timeline of War

God of War: Ascension is the sixth *God of War* game, but it's chronologically the first. It's not the series' first prequel, either. Confused? Here's a timeline that puts everything in perspective:

2008

God of War: Chains of Olympus

Set during Kratos' days as a loyal servant of the gods, this PSP prequel sees him rescuing Helios from the god of sleep—and fighting a conspiracy in the depths of the underworld.

2005

God of War

After 10 years of serving the gods, Kratos is ordered to kill his former master, Ares, the god of war. This involves opening Pandora's Box, taking its power, and laying the foundations for later betrayals.

2010

God of War: Ghost of Sparta

Having replaced Ares, Kratos learns his long-lost brother Deimos may still be alive, held prisoner by the gods, and sets out to find him. The tragic results leave him more bitter and bloodthirsty than ever.

2007

God of War II

Consumed by anger, Kratos sends Spartan troops on a rampage across Greece, worrying the Olympians. When Zeus betrays and nearly kills him, Kratos begins a journey to change Fate itself—and to get even.

2010

God of War III

Picking up where *God of War II* left off, Kratos' "final" adventure involves a top-to-bottom-and-back-again trip through Mt. Olympus and the brutal elimination of the Greek pantheon. Revenge complete.

enemies into stun states much faster, enabling Kratos to do horrible things to them.

God of War's combat is still primarily about chain-blades, and this younger Kratos has a few new tricks up his (nonexistent) sleeves where they're concerned as well. Chief among these is the new tether move, which lets Kratos wrap one of his chains around an enemy. Then, while still able to attack other creatures with his free hand, he can yank the tethered one off its feet and slam it around like a wrecking ball.

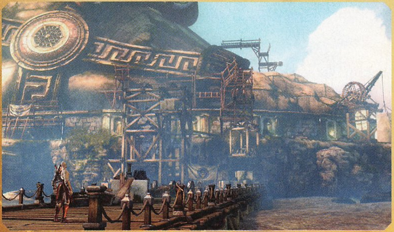
Kratos isn't the only one with this ability either, as we soon learn when the satyrs' "captain" attacks. A returning idea from *God of War III*, captain creatures will be able to command and control squads of smaller monsters, ordering them to attack Kratos in formation. This particular one, a larger-than-normal satyr, wields a chain blade like Kratos, and can similarly use it to tether Kratos and jerk him around. However, this isn't enough to save its life, and after a few quick, savage beatings, Kratos begins a quick time event (with button prompts at the edges of the screen, like in *God of War III*) that sees him using his sword to chop the satyr captain's legs off before running the creature through and pinning it to the dock.

Following the kill, Kratos looks out across the water to see massive, distant tentacles rise up out of the deep to menace a ship. The vessel's no match for the monster, and after ripping the boat to pieces, the creature hurls the splintered remains of its prow directly at Kratos.

Playing With Time

The beast misses, but manages to collapse a scaffold that appears to be Kratos' only way up the sheer cliff face. This gives us a chance to see another of Kratos' new abilities, which the developers are calling LifeCycle. A beam of greenish light, LifeCycle can be used to rebuild the shattered scaffolding. But unlike similar features in other games, Kratos can also return the structure to its smashed state or suspend it halfway through (or at whatever other points the devs deem appropriate). Freezing it in its halfway state, Kratos uses the floating stone blocks and shredded planks as platforms to climb up and hop over to an adjacent cliff. Then, turning around, he returns it to its whole state, and uses an elevator inside it to head up to a cliffside path.

Stepping onto the path, Kratos witnesses another pack of satyrs attacking a group of three slaves with javelins. Two die instantly, but Kratos pushes the third out of an oncoming javelin's path, exhibiting some of that humanity we've heard about. Our incredulity at this rare moment of mercy rapidly disappears, however, as Kratos goes to town on the satyrs with a new sub-weapon—a spear—as well as one of LifeCycle's combat applications: By focusing the beam on enemies, Kratos can slow, stun, and launch them into

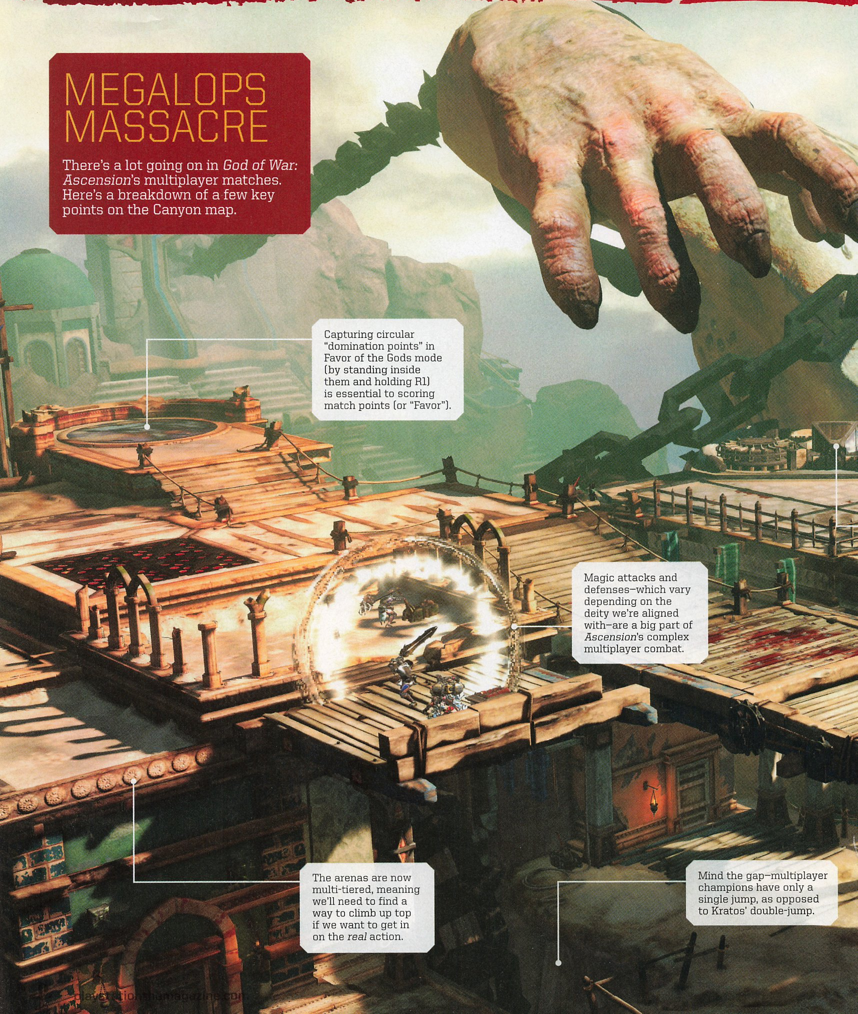


> "By far, single-player is our bread and butter. We know that."
>
> –Game Director Todd Papy

△ The Elephantaur is a little intimidating, but nothing Kratos can't handle.

MEGALOPS MASSACRE

There's a lot going on in *God of War: Ascension*'s multiplayer matches. Here's a breakdown of a few key points on the Canyon map.

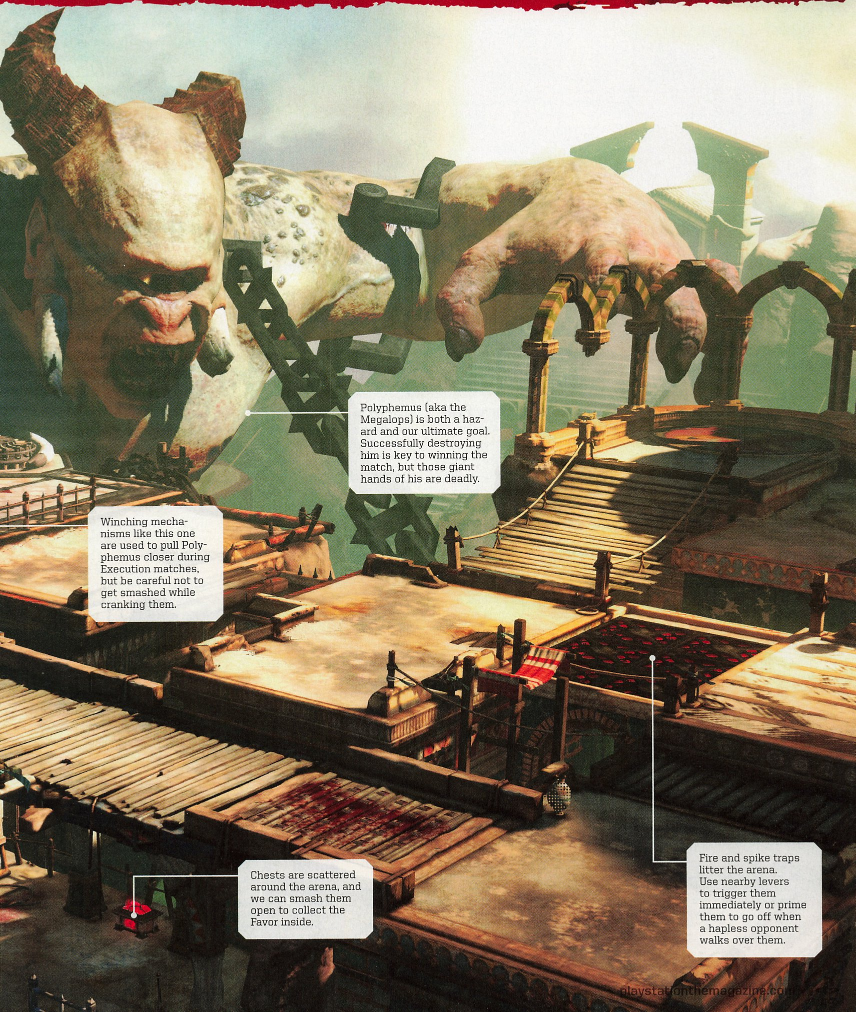


Capturing circular "domination points" in Favor of the Gods mode (by standing inside them and holding R1) is essential to scoring match points (or "Favor").

Magic attacks and defenses—which vary depending on the deity we're aligned with—are a big part of *Ascension*'s complex multiplayer combat.

The arenas are now multi-tiered, meaning we'll need to find a way to climb up top if we want to get in on the *real* action.

Mind the gap—multiplayer champions have only a single jump, as opposed to Kratos' double-jump.



Polyphemus (aka the Megalops) is both a hazard and our ultimate goal. Successfully destroying him is key to winning the match, but those giant hands of his are deadly.

Winching mechanisms like this one are used to pull Polyphemus closer during Execution matches, but be careful not to get smashed while cranking them.

Chests are scattered around the arena, and we can smash them open to collect the Favor inside.

Fire and spike traps litter the arena. Use nearby levers to trigger them immediately or prime them to go off when a hapless opponent walks over them.

GORE IS COMPLICATED

Gruesome executions have always been one of *God of War*'s hallmarks, with each game going out of its way to outdo the last. What surprised us, however, was just how much time and effort goes into creating them.

"When [executions] happen, we want to get in and really see it happen up close and personal," says lead artist Chris Sutton. "We want to make sure we have the same level of polish and detail we put into everything else we do. Doing that requires a lot of people.

"There have to be character modelers that actually model the parts, and at that point it has to go over to the rigging department to make sure it's set up so it can be animated properly.

"Then it goes to the animators, and they have to animate the whole sequence. The combat guys have to hook it all up and make sure everything plays correctly, and the effects guys lay the effects on top of it. Then we have to go in and make sure all the lighting and flags are set up correctly, so everything will light correctly. Collisions have to be correct, so if something hits the ground, it acts like it hits the ground. There are so many departments that are involved, and I think that's really where the complexity comes in."

"I was talking to someone the other day about the price tag of each of those things, and it's a lot," adds *Ascension*'s senior producer Whitney Wade. "Each one of those things is a little work of art on its own."

the air, opening them up to all kinds of brutal punishment. After Kratos sends the satyrs back to Hades, he tries to use his tether to yank some debris out of his way—only to have it be knocked aside by one of the sea monster's tentacles, which has reached up to smash him.

Shoving away the tentacle with the help of a few mashed buttons, Kratos is quickly confronted by another threat: a hammer-wielding statue, which comes to life and knocks Kratos for a loop. Something extraordinary is clearly needed here, so Kratos activates his power-boosting Rage ability, which works a little differently from what we're used to.

"We're getting rid of the Rage of the Gods," says Papy of the feature also interchangeably named for the Titans or Sparta. "We're trying to make this a little more of a metagame that you build up and use during fights. So it would be something that we want to reward players for playing very, very well."

The new Rage will be built up by "combos, any sort of special moves, kills," he adds. "It's any way that really supports Kratos' action in being the badass he is."

The Harder They Fall

After using his Rage-charged blades to smash the statue, Kratos continues onward, rapidly climbing up the cliff face—something he now does barehanded, scrambling between little outcroppings instead of stabbing into the wall with his blades—until he reaches a platform at the base of the colossus. More satyrs appear almost immediately, but this time they've got a friend: a hulking, club-wielding, elephant-headed giant that Papy tells us will replace the series' staple Minotaurs in *Ascension*. Time to break out the big guns. Kratos shows off one of his magic attacks, which involves plunging his blades into the ground and letting loose a ring of fire.

In addition to being big, muscular, and faintly creepy, the "Elephantaur" is a grappler, and once Kratos has done enough damage to destroy his club, he starts to get grabby. Kratos beats him to it, though: After stunning the creature, Kratos grabs the Elephantaur's head and wrestles him to the ground.

"This is what we consider the future of minigames," says Papy. Rather than just another flashy quick time kill, Kratos' final blows against the Elephantaur are handled more dynamically, with Kratos able to freely slam his fists into the beast, dodge its flailing attacks ("I have to watch what they're doing," adds Papy), and finally plunge one of the blades into its scalp before slowly dragging it forward, giving the Elephantaur's pulsing brain a chance to throb through the split in the creature's skull.

As soon as the Elephantaur is down, the tentacled sea monster makes its presence known once again, attacking the platform and forcing Kratos to leap into the sea. Just as the monster's dagger-like teeth break the surface of the waves below him, Kratos roars and our glimpse of *Ascension's* single-player campaign ends.

Unfriendly Competition

There's more to the game than Kratos' story this time, something we learned when *Ascension's* initial reveal focused exclusively on its new multiplayer mode.

"The whole reason we introduced [multiplayer] first was, if we came out with single-player and then said, 'Oh yeah, we're doing multiplayer as well,' then fans, press, everybody would be wondering what the hell we were doing, and why," Papy says about the reveal. "By far, single-player is our bread and butter. We know that, and we are focused on that as well as the multiplayer, but we wanted to answer those questions before they were even asked."

Kept separate from Kratos' story, *Ascension's* multiplayer action centers on battles between two teams of up to four beefy warriors, with customizable loadouts that include somewhat simpler weapons (our hands-on session offered the choice between a huge sword and an intimidating sledgehammer), as well as magic attacks and armor. In spite of the seemingly uncomplicated weapons, the combat doesn't feel much different from the best of what Kratos can pull off, complete with light and heavy attacks, elaborate combos, nasty executions, smashable chests,

Arsenal of Olympus

Instead of powerful, unique artifacts, secondary weapons in *Ascension* are relatively ordinary, can be found scattered throughout the world, and carry distinct advantages for different combat styles.

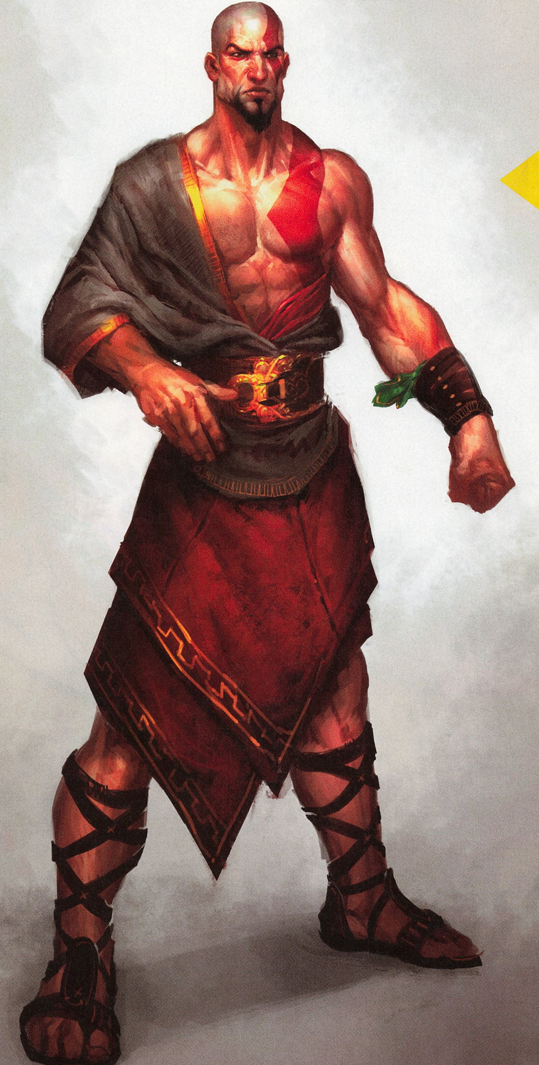
Club
Ascension's most powerful sub-weapon, the club can send enemies flying, making it a particularly brutal follow-up to Kratos' blade attacks.

Sword
Big, quick, and devastating, swords can rapidly cut a bloody swath through enemies, making them ideal for racking up high combo counts.

Spear
Faster than even the sword, *Ascension's* spears boast superior range, as well as giving Kratos something to throw at out-of-range foes.

Shield
Giving Kratos the ability to deflect otherwise unblockable attacks, the shield's also good for bashing enemies and briefly stunning them.

Sling
Ascension's most powerful ranged sub-weapon, the sling lets Kratos hurl explosive balls of energy at distant enemies.



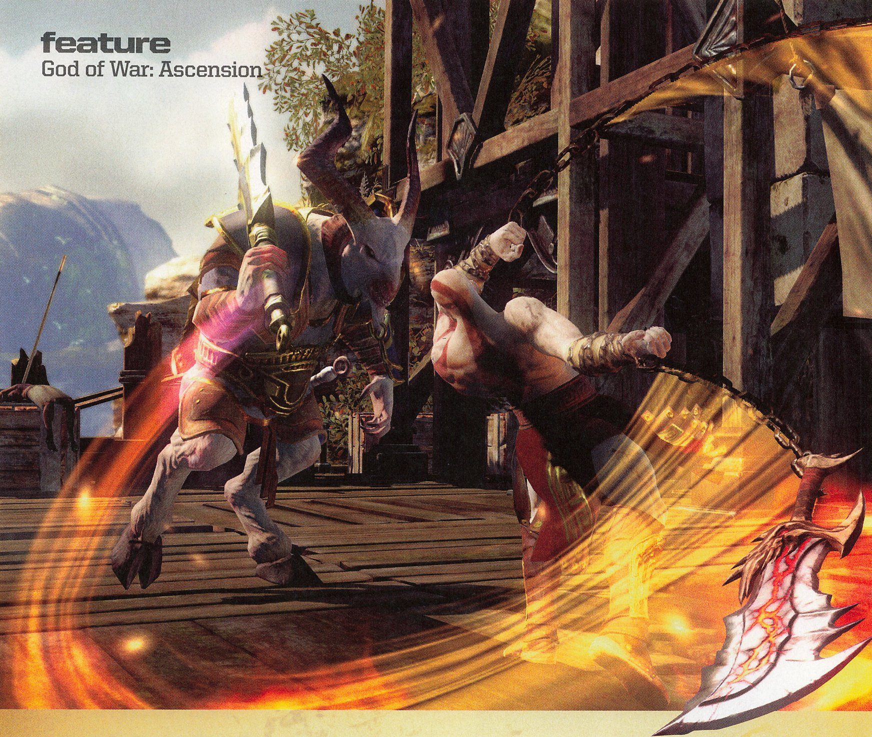
KRATOS ON THE TOWN

Even Kratos can't spend *all* his time being a relentless lunatic. When *Ascension*'s creative team decided they wanted to humanize Kratos, they asked a lot of questions about what his off-screen life might be like.

"When we first started, it was, 'How can we boil this character down to his essence, and how can we start humanizing him and start talking about either his family or other things that happened in his life?'" says game director Todd Papy. "If he were at home, what would he be doing? We even joked about it—and actually, we did a concept piece for it that's not in the game [shown at left]—but what if Kratos had a date night? What would he wear going out on the town?"

"We want to try new things," says Papy. "We want to take this character and see how we can spin it just a little bit different, so that when the players play it, they see something new."

> "We want to take this character and see how we can spin it just a little bit different."
>
> —*Game Director Todd Papy*



and limited-use sub-weapons (which include, among others, the Blades of Chaos and the dash-enabling Boots of Hermes).

Because it's easy for the action to devolve into players massing up and whaling on each other with a confusing flurry of multi-hit combos (in what Papy calls an "amoeba ball"), steps have been taken to keep things balanced. These include an "escape" button to help us break out of combos, as well as special moves, counters to those special moves, a parry system, and chain-tethers that can, among other things, counter an opponent's parry.

"You want to try and make sure that every player feels powerful themselves, but at the same time can handle somebody doing that to them," says Jason McDonald, *Ascension's* lead combat designer. "Kratos has very long range, and one of the first things we did when we attempted multiplayer was, we just put a bunch of Kratoses in the scene to see how that felt. It felt as expected; everyone had immense range, everyone had crazy powerful plumes that took everybody out, and everybody was hitting everybody at the same time. So we really had to make the combat more personal.

"There's also brutality in the simplicity," continues McDonald. "There's a brutality to using a simple weapon to beat down people. It actually feels different from Kratos, which is good."

Beyond Muscles

As beefy and bloody as *Ascension's* combat is, it's possible to get ahead by means other than brute force. For example, the arenas are littered with spike and fire traps that can either be sprung manually with nearby levers or set to trigger automatically when other players walk over them (the controller buzzes briefly to let us know we're walking on them, allowing a split-second to jump away).

We'll also be able to use magical attacks that are tied to the god our "champion" is aligned with (as a warrior aligned with Ares, the attack we tried took us off-screen briefly, letting us aim a fiery drop attack from above). There are currently four gods to choose from—Ares, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades—each of which roughly corresponds to a class type. Before we begin multiplayer in the finished game, we'll be able to run through a tutorial that will let us play around with different weapons and god allegiances to get a feel for what suits us best. Then, we'll be forced to make a choice.

"In *God of War,* you saw how Kratos sold his soul to Ares. It's very similar," says Papy. "In essence, you're a prisoner and you

The elaborate, balletic arcs Kratos cuts through the air with the Blades of Chaos still haven't lost their brutal allure.

GO AHEAD, LOOK AROUND

Multiplayer isn't the only new thing *Ascension* is bringing to the franchise—for the first time, *God of War* fans will be given a measure of control over the (normally fixed) camera. That doesn't mean we'll be able to freely pan around Kratos and see everything, though. Instead, clicking R3 will shift to an over-the-shoulder view, from which we can nudge the camera around and see things we normally might not.

Giving players 360-degree control, Papy says, wouldn't work with the way the levels are being built. "For the most part, we built a movie set. We put all of our detail in three walls versus the fourth wall, which is the camera. We want to make sure the players can nudge and look around. It's not complete control, but it's much better than what we've ever had.

"A lot of the time, the artists build stuff and they're like, 'Come on, can't you show this off?' and now we can," says Papy. "But the player has to find it themselves."

> "There's a brutality in the simplicity. It feels different from Kratos, which is good."
>
> *–Lead Combat Designer Jason McDonald*

break free, and at that moment you're fighting a big creature, and you would have to sell your soul to stay alive. From there, you choose what allegiance you want to go to, and you get put back in."

Big creatures, as we've seen before, play a pretty significant role in multiplayer, although so far we've only seen one: the massive Cyclops known as Polyphemus. Chained to the sprawling, multi-tiered arena in the Favor of the Gods mode, Polyphemus can be killed once the winning team has earned enough points (aka "Favor") by taking and holding all the arena's "domination points." When that's accomplished, the gods will drop a holy weapon into the arena, which can then be used to assault Polyphemus (as we dodge his smashing fists) in a series of gruesome, disfiguring team attacks that will leave his mouth torn, his eye exploded, and his torso disemboweled.

While this is going on, the losing team's job will be to run interference in an effort to keep their opponents from mutilating the giant. Should they fail, the developers are looking at ways to keep them from rage-quitting while the winners gut the beast. One possibility, Papy says, is a minigame in which a losing champion's patron god tries to strike him down. At that point, "you can buttonmash to show that you're worthy and fight back against it," says Papy. "And then that gives you a point boost toward your overall champion. I guess the way our society's going now, even losers are winners," he chuckles. "Everybody gets a trophy."

New Beginnings

Multiplayer's obviously a big step forward for the franchise, and while it's a prequel, one of *God of War: Ascension's* biggest goals seems to be to take *God of War* to places it's never been, including—as the Furies work their magic on Kratos' mind—to the beginnings of his madness. And while Kratos himself may be younger, sleeker, and more humane than in *God of War III*, the series' massive scale and furious combat promise to be bigger than ever—especially now that the team has years of PS3 development experience under its belt.

"Timeline-wise and story-wise, we have to look forward and make sure there's that continuity there," says *Ascension's* lead artist, Chris Sutton, "but we're still kind of freed up, and Kratos can go explore some new stuff he hasn't really explored before. We're not really stuck to the original story of the trilogy. I think it's given us an opportunity to explore some stuff we haven't really seen from Kratos."

PS3

Is 3D the future or folly? The answer remains inconclusive, but it's clear the flow of 3D tech and content will only continue to grow. Videogames could be the key to the third dimension's success in the home, and PS3 is ready to lead the charge. **By John Gaudiosi**

When it comes to 3D, everyone has an opinion. And unless you're James Cameron, many opinions about 3D remain negative—whether it's because of the high cost of entry, the complaints about wearing 3D glasses, the dearth of quality 3D entertainment, the lack of an industry 3D standard, or arguments that the technology doesn't really add much to movies. But those in control of Hollywood—bolstered by the recent successes of *Titanic 3D* and *The Avengers*—are keeping 3D at the forefront of entertainment. More than 20,000 RealD theaters exist in the world today, and more than 725 million people have watched a 3D movie to date. The task of bringing 3D successfully to the home market—something that has yet to really happen—could rely heavily on gaming.

"Videogames are going to be the drivers," says Cameron. "You're going to see a stampede of 3D videogames and that, in turn, is just going to catalyze more broad-scale adoption in the home of these big 3D screens."

But despite a blitzkrieg of marketing by the biggest names in electronics, sales of 3D TVs haven't taken off since their debut at the 2009 Consumer Electronics Show. Initial high prices, coupled with continued consumer confusion over multiple formats, have kept the majority of people from taking the 3D plunge.

One 3D Console to Rule Them All

PS3 owners, however, don't have to worry about evolving technology, because the Sony console already supports the full range of options currently available.

"When you play a videogame today without 3D, it's almost like you're playing with one eye closed," says SCEA's platform research manager David Coombes. "The great thing about PlayStation 3 is that it supports any type of 3D TV technology—active, passive, stereo, autostereo—as long as it has HDMI 1.4, which is the international standard for 3D."

Coombes says the reason PS3

The Rise of 3D TVs

A look at a growing market

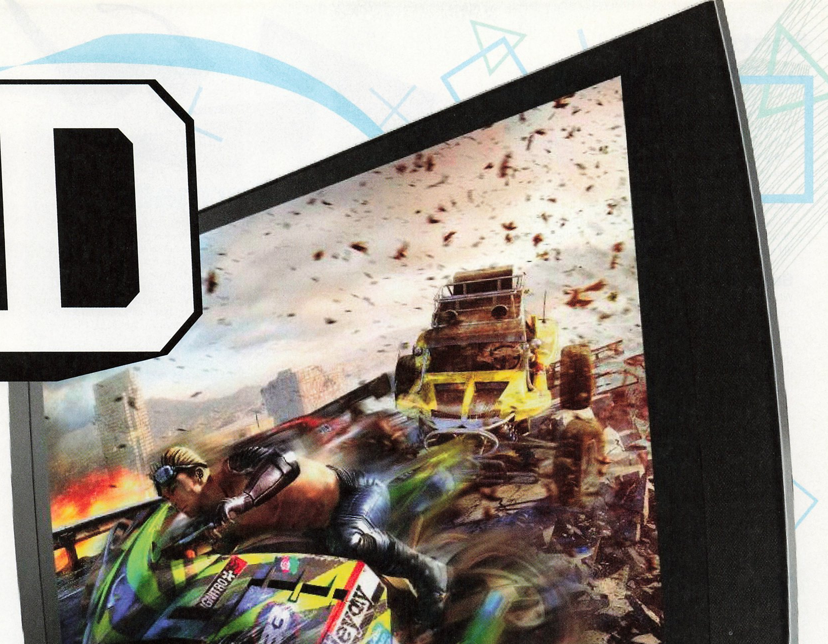
According to a recent report from Research and Markets, the global 3D TV market size is expected to grow to more than $100 billion by the end of 2014 as companies like SCEA, Ubisoft, Disney Interactive, Namco Bandai, and Warner Bros. Interactive release 3D versions of big franchises.

North America will be a key market for 3D TVs moving forward. The U.S. 3D TV market is forecasted to surpass $25 billion by 2015. Canada, despite its smaller population, is expected to top $10 billion in 3D TV sales by 2015.

Although still in its infancy, and plagued by competing technologies and the lack of an industry standard, the U.S. market has been the leader in 3D TV penetration. The U.S. currently has the largest installed base of 3D TVs (40 percent) in the entire world. South Korea is in second place with 26 percent. Moving forward, European countries and Japan are expected to see record growth over the next few years.

The summer of 2012 is expected to be a very good one for 3D TV sales, according to Lindsay Sakraida of DealNews.com. The price of 55-inch 3D TVs has been halved from $1,400 in February 2011 to $700 in February 2012. That trend will continue through Christmas, when some of the bigger 3D movies (*Titanic 3D, Men in Black 3D, The Amazing Spider-Man*, and *Prometheus*) hit Blu-ray alongside more 3D games.

D



The endless obstacles in *MotorStorm Apocalypse* become a little easier to see when they're rushing at us in 3D.

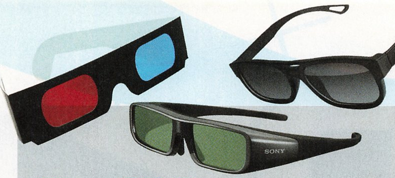
can deliver quality 3D movie and gaming experiences is because of its cell processor, which renders one image for the right eye and another for the left eye, and then packs them up and sends them to the TV. The TV unpacks the images and sends them back to the viewer instantly.

The first generation of games that were developed from the ground up to take advantage of 3D entered the market last year, including first-party titles like *Killzone 3*, *Uncharted 3*, *Motorstorm Apocalypse* and *Resistance 3*. And plenty of other games that use 3D as a key part of the experience are in the works.

Sony's 3D King of the World

While Cameron continues to lead 3D's charge in Hollywood, Sony has its own 3D innovator. The man behind PlayStation's 3D gaming present and future is Mick Hocking, director of Sony Worldwide Studios' 3D stereoscopic team. He travels to game studios around the globe, working with developers to ensure that they can make the most of 3D technology, and also learn from the R&D that Sony has been doing in Liverpool, England, where Hocking is based.

"One of the most important things when developing games for 3D is to process a comfortable viewing experience that the viewer can enjoy for a sustained period of time," explains Hocking. "We do a lot of work educating teams on how to produce 3D correctly, which involves keeping objects at the right distance within a screen to avoid any strain on your eyes. We also share code and other resources with teams so they can pool the knowledge we've been developing."



The 3D Formats

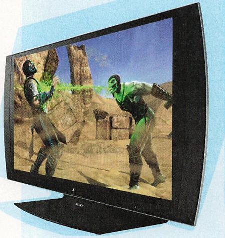
There are multiple types of 3D. Anaglyph—those cheap red and blue plastic glasses that used to come in cereal boxes—hasn't evolved much since the '50s, but it's still used today by some game studios, primarily for Wii and Xbox 360 games. The major 3D technologies that are prevalent today are passive polarized glasses and active-shutter glasses. It's worth noting that polarized viewing technology has been improving, and the latest TVs offer true HD 3D experiences, whereas in the past, the visual resolution had to be cut in half for each eye's image. This technology is used by companies like RealD for 3D movie viewing.

Active-shutter technology is similar to anaglyph, but eliminates the color distortion. The active-shutter glasses technology is used by a wide variety of TV manufacturers and by Sony, in particular, for its 24-inch PlayStation 3D Display. Powered by a small battery, these glasses incorporate LCD lenses that sync to alternating frames displayed on the TV. While these glasses can cost $100 or more, they deliver a brighter, full HD 3D experience.

There are also a growing number of options for autostereoscopic (glasses-free) 3D offerings. This technology is currently used by portable devices like the Nintendo 3DS, Sprint Evo 3D, and AT&T Thrill 4G. More consumer electronics companies are developing larger glasses-free 3D screens for the home market, although view-angle challenges and cost issues have kept these devices from becoming mainstream thus far.

Top 3D TVs

There are a lot of 3D TVs out there, and prices are dropping. Here are six that are worth adding to your entertainment center.



PlayStation 3D Display ($299)
Sony has just slashed the price of its 24-inch active-shutter 3D PlayStation monitor, which also offers SimulView—the ability for two players to see their own view perspective through their respective glasses, replacing traditional splitscreen gameplay. This sleek, but small, display is perfect for a dorm or bedroom, and the new price makes it easy for anyone to jump into the 3D experience. This is the most affordable way to enter the 3D market today.

Panasonic VIERA TC-P55ST30 55-Inch 1080p 3D Plasma HDTV ($1,599)
Panasonic has been a leader in 3D, and this TV's recent price drop makes it more accessible. The Viera uses the Infinite Black 2 panel to display more vivid pictures (in both 2D and 3D), and that shows through when watching 3D movies or playing 3D games. Also, VIERA Connect gives this Smart TV access to a range of video-on-demand and other online services.

Vizio 65-inch Class Theater 3D Edge Lit Razor LED HDTV with VIZIO Internet Apps ($2,199)
Vizio has made a name for itself with its low-priced flatscreen HDTVs. Over the years, the company has vastly improved the quality of its products, while still offering value. This 65-inch 3D TV features polarized stereoscopic technology for great gaming, movie, and broadcast viewing, as well as access to online services including YouTube 3D.

Next-gen 3D Technology

△ **Nintendo's 3DS offers glasses-free 3D, but making the tech practical for bigscreen TVs is a challenge.**

So what's it going to take for you to invest your hard-earned money in another new TV? Experts believe that the key to mainstream adoption of 3D TVs will be the advent of lower-priced autostereoscopic (glasses-free) 3D. According to research firm Interpret's 3D Entertainment Study, having to wear 3D glasses is the number-one dislike among those who have experienced 3D technology (57 percent among those who have experienced 3D gaming). Right now, the major obstacle with glasses-free 3D is the ability for multiple people to get the appropriate depth from a single screen. But that technology is quickly evolving.

"There are many different pieces of research going on, and lots of companies are producing either parallax barrier screens or lenticular screens to try and produce the 3D effect," says Mick Hocking, director of Sony Worldwide Studios' 3D stereoscopic team. "But the problem with all of them is inherent in the design and the rules of physics, because you have to get the light to go to each eye. You either have to use lenses or a barrier to achieve that effect, which means if you move your face relative to the screen, you will have artifacts or ghosting appearing across the screen. Typically, only one viewer can view the screen at once because they're only designed to have one point at where the images work."

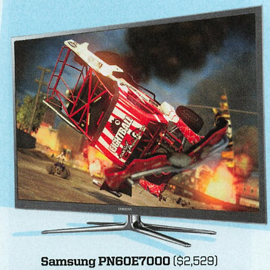
Hocking says new technology is on the horizon. There's panoptic or multi-imaging, which essentially captures all the light from a scene similar to how a fisheye lens would. When you view this on a panoptic display, you have what essentially look like small fisheye images on the screen, and then the lenses on the screen expand that light back out so that it looks correct.

"The early examples of this produce a display which is fairly low-resolution at the moment, but you can walk around, you can have multiple viewers," explains Hocking. "There's no ghosting or artifacts on the display at all, and you can see a consistent 3D image within the display. That is possibly one [method] that could provide glasses-free without any of the compromises. It looks very complex to actually produce that, and we're watching with interest to see what the guys in the research community can come up with and whether anyone can develop a screen like that."

Even games that haven't been developed from the ground up for 3D, like *Gran Turismo 5*, have been able to implement the feeling of being in an actual car with the added dimension. And Hocking's team is working to ensure that Sony's lineup of upcoming games will also take full advantage of 3D technology.

With a perfect storm of lower prices and key films and games hitting the market, the industry doesn't expect 3D to become relegated to a mere fad, like it was in the 1950s. The investment in infrastructure in theaters around the globe ensures that Hollywood will remain committed to 3D moving forward. And it's just a matter of time (and evolving technology) before 3D's migration into the home achieves critical mass. Today, most homes have HD TVs. Down the line, living rooms will evolve into 3D HD Smart TVs. The key to the success of 3D remains quality content—gaming, broadcast, and movies. And that's something that's happening on all content fronts.

But why wait for the future when it's already residing in your PS3? Here's everything you need to know to enjoy a cutting-edge home 3D experience today.



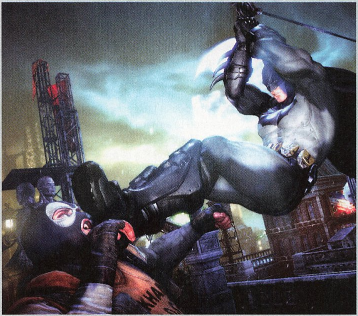
Samsung PN60E7000 ($2,529)
Samsung has partnered with Gaikai to deliver cloud gaming to all of its customers who purchase any 2012 7000 series (or above) 3D Smart TV. This 60-inch model is a nice entry point, allowing instant streaming access to over 100 games. Samsung will utilize Gaikai's platform to launch game titles directly from the TV's Smart Hub environment. These TVs feature dual-core processors and an improved All Black Pure Filter.

LG 55-inch LM9600 Cinema 3D TV ($3,599)
The International 3D Society just gave Sharp an award for innovation in 3D TV technology, so this is a safe bet. This TV uses passive technology just like in the movie theaters. One cool gaming feature is that in addition to 3D glasses, LG includes Dual Play glasses with this set. As with the PlayStation 3D Display, this feature allows two players to play splitscreen games without an actual splitscreen.

Sharp AQUOS 80-inch Quattron 8 Series 3D LED TV ($5,999)
Also available in 60-inch ($2,699) and 70-inch ($3,699) models, Sharp's 8 Series AQUOS Quattron 3D LED TVs are ultra thin, offering active-shutter stereoscopic 3D (extra glasses cost around $50 each), as well as built-in Wi-Fi and SmartCentral technology. The 80-inch model offers more brilliant 3D (and HD) images through its full array LED, while the smaller models utilize edge-lit LED.

Best 3D Games

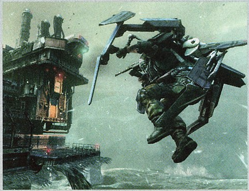
Proof positive that 3D can add a welcome new dimension to gaming



Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Although first-person shooters were the focal point for early 3D gaming, it's third-person games that really make the most of the technology. Naughty Dog created one of the most cinematic 3D adventure games available, and it's a showcase for why putting the protagonist front and center can make all the difference. Adding 3D brings us much closer to the life-or-death predicaments of Nathan Drake, letting us practically feel the heat of the flames as a building burns to the ground around us, and try not to get dizzy as a battle ensues on the loading ramp of an airborne cargo plane.

Batman: Arkham City
This critically acclaimed sequel from Rocksteady Studios makes use of Unreal Engine 3's 3D capabilities to bring the seedy neon underworld of Gotham City to life. 3D accentuates the inordinate level of detail the developer lovingly built into this living, breathing city. Although the Christopher Nolan movies have demurred from 3D, Batman has never looked better than in this virtual tour de force. From the fisticuffs on the ground, where dealing with multiple enemies is actually easier with the added depth, to sightseeing from high above as Batman dives through the air, pinpointing targets, 3D enhances the feeling of what it'd be like to be the Caped Crusader.

Killzone 3
Imagine the opening sequence of *Saving Private Ryan* in 3D, on steroids. That's what Guerrilla Games was going for when it designed this shooter from the ground up to take advantage of 3D, and it shows. The ability to more accurately target Helghast enemies in the field is just one advantage 3D gamers will have. The extra dimension also brings the intensity of the battlefield to life with explosions leaving craters in the ground and troops and vehicles jockeying for position as mortars and bullets zoom by. It's an intense way to experience the nightmare of Helghan.



Motorstorm Apocalypse
Years of research went into Evolution Studio's arcade racer, which plays like a Hollywood disaster movie. Adding 3D to the mix accentuates the feeling of vertigo in the game's adrenaline-fueled rooftop levels and kicks the entire experience into overdrive.

Mortal Kombat
NetherRealm Studios went back to its 2D fighting roots with last year's reboot of the Fatality-infused brawler, but also added 3D to the mix. The result is a fighter that uses 3D to accentuate the brutal gladiators and bring the interactive environments to life. Beating opponents to a bloody pulp never seemed so lifelike.

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Solider
Ubisoft has been pushing 3D gaming since its *Avatar* game. All of that research and development has paid off with this newest Tom Clancy shooter. The 3D is especially noteworthy in multiplayer, where the third dimension enhances our peripheral vision as we hunt down enemies in team-based game modes like Conflict and Decoy. Objects like cemetery tombstones and cargo crates stand out more in the cover-based gameplay, allowing us to get a better sense of their surroundings amidst heavy gunfire.

3D Gaming's Next Wave

Each new 3D gaming implementation seems to get better than the last. Here's what to play next.

Star Trek
Digital Extremes is introducing a new take on cooperative gameplay by focusing on Kirk and Spock's different strengths in combat. 3D promises to help us better target enemies and bring across *Star Trek's* immense scale.

God of War: Ascension
The single-player experience from Sony's Santa Monica Studios will bring Kratos to life in 3D (something previously done in the HD conversions of the original games). *Ascension* is being designed from the ground up to add another dimension to the action, meaning we can expect gargantuan creatures to practically rise out of the TV.

NBA 2K13
Visual Concepts has been improving the 3D experience for its best-selling basketball franchise for years now. Just as the real NBA has embraced 3D broadcasts of its games, this sports game shines in 3D. The players come to life and the hardwood courts become the focal point of the action in a new way.

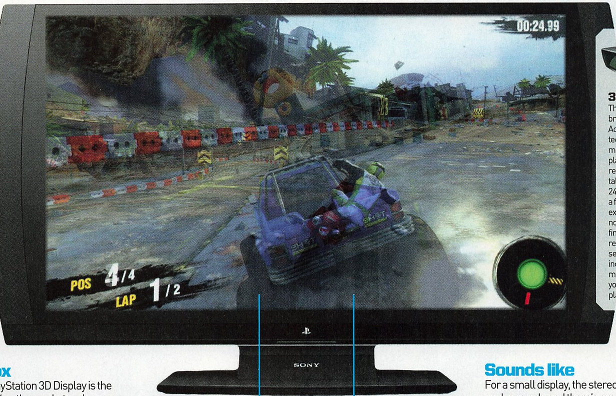
Game Devs on 3D

"My feelings about stereo 3D gaming are that it makes a lot of sense for a game that's appropriate, a game where you're going into the world like *Gears of War* or *Call of Duty* and things like that. When you have to take that extra step of putting on those glasses, you want a sit-down, deep, immersive experience."
Cliff Bleszinski
Design Director, Epic Games

"We've been really lucky throughout our development of 3D projects like *Motorstorm Apocalypse* to have technicians from the British aerospace industry that joined us many years ago. We worked with them to prototype with stereoscopic 3D for the past five years, and *Apocalypse* is very much the culmination of all of that research and development."
Matt Southern
Game Director, Evolution Studios

"Putting 3D into *Uncharted 3* was a very interesting process for us, because the opportunities it opened were two-fold. For our traversal gameplay, our climbing, you get a much deeper sense of vertigo. Also, from the standpoint of our combat gameplay, when you're hiding behind a piece of cover, you can now peek out of it and really see around the corners more easily, get sightlines on enemies, and really feel the depth of the scene. It enhances all the pillars of our gameplay."
Jacob Minkoff
Co-lead Designer, Naughty Dog

One display, one game, two full-screen views



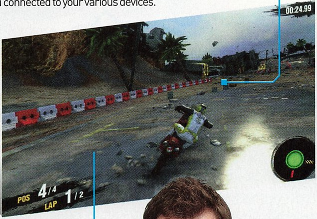
3D glasses
These PlayStation-branded goggles contain Active Shutter 3D technology. Active 3D means full HD 1080p playback with no loss of resolution. And while we're talking numbers, a slick 240hz refresh rate means a far smoother 3D experience. Plus, there's no need to worry about finding batteries or recharging for hours. Two sets of USB leads are included, and a mere three minutes of charge will set you up for three hours of playtime.

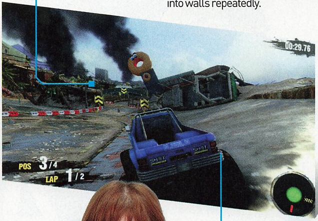
In the box

At $299, the PlayStation 3D Display is the cheapest 3D TV on the market and comes with *Motorstorm Apocalypse*, an HDMI cable, and a pair of 3D glasses. Input-wise, there are two HDMI ports and a component connection to keep you connected to your various devices.

Sounds like

For a small display, the stereo speakers pack a punch, and there's even a built-in subwoofer to blast your ears into submission. A headphone jack is in there, too, just in case you don't want the world to hear you crashing into walls repeatedly.





Fool screen

SimulView means Gamer #1 can plan his overtaking without Gamer #2 having any idea of where he is. This is the smile of a man preparing to win. At least we hope that's what it is...

Element of surprise

Happily oblivious, Gamer #2 may not be in first place for long. At least there's no loss of image quality with SimulView, and she'll be snuck up on in full HD.

MAX PAYNE 3

Clues and Golden Gun Parts guide

Discover the locations of every single collectible in the single-player campaign

By Matt Hughes

A fter redecorating the carpet with the brain matter of one of the kidnappers, a shiny glint caught the corner of my eye. This ex-cop thought he was seeing things—an all-too-common side effect of my doctor-disapproved diet of booze and pills. But the realization of what I'd found hit me like a loose brick falling from the crumbling fourth wall. Honestly, I had enough on my plate at that point without adding a side of confusion over why there were pieces of golden guns just lying around out in open. All I knew was I'd need some kind of help to sniff out every last part. Maybe...a guide.*

gamesradar.

Among other things, our sister publication GamesRadar has been putting together comprehensive, video-driven guides to the latest games for years now, and this month they're giving PTOM readers a gift: every hidden clue and golden gun part in *Max Payne 3*. Scan the QR code to see the guide and its videos online, and look for more at www.gamesradar.com.

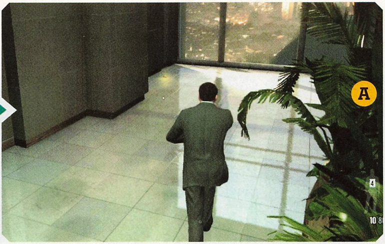
SCAN IT!

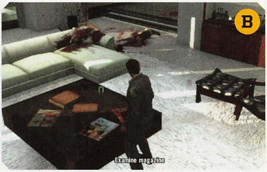
http://bit.ly/Jb9YDL

Chapter 1: Something Rotten in the Air

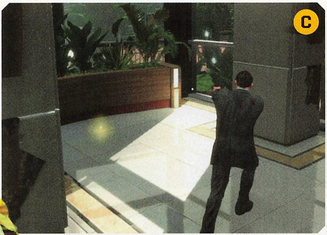
Gun parts: 3
Clues: 2

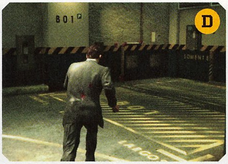
Scan the QR code to see it on video! bit.ly/JZGnyP

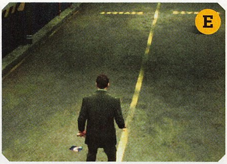




Ⓐ **PT92: part 1 of 3** Immediately after the game's first two kills, continue down the hall past the open door and grab this part from the floor in the corner. Ⓑ **Clue 1: Celebrity Magazine** After your first two kills, enter the penthouse, clear out the enemies, then look for a magazine next to some painkillers on the large brown coffee table.





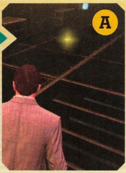


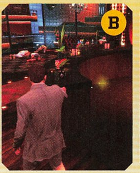
Ⓒ **PT92: part 2 of 3** Immediately after the forced cover tutorial, finish off the baddies, then turn around and look in the corner of the room for this part. Ⓓ **PT92: part 3 of 3** Just after you hit the switch to open the garage door, proceed through and all the way to the opposite wall (where it says "B01"). Turn right and check the corner for a part. Ⓔ **Clue 2: Dropped Photo** You'll practically step on this as you climb the ramp to the next parking garage level. You'll be prompted to search for clues here, so you can't miss it.

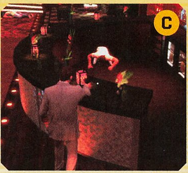
Chapter 2: Nothing but the Second Best

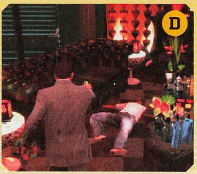
Gun parts: 6
Clues: 6

Scan the QR code to see it on video! bit.ly/Knuabg

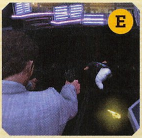


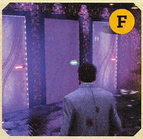


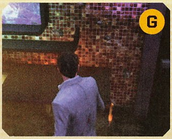


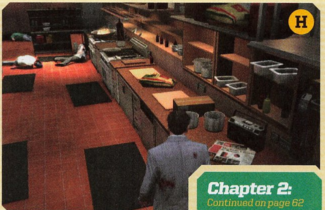


Ⓐ **.38 Revolver: part 1 of 3** After diving through the glass and clearing the room, turn around and climb up into the DJ booth to find a part. Ⓑ **Mini-30: part 1 of 3** After finding out the door is chained shut, you'll make your way to the VIP lounge. Once there, check the floor behind the bar for a part. Ⓒ **Clue 1: Nightclub Flyer** This is on the bar in the VIP lounge, very close to the gun part listed above. Ⓓ **Clue 2: Dead Soccer Star** In the VIP lounge, check the white-shirted corpse in the far left corner of the room, near the sofa.







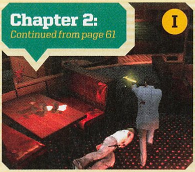


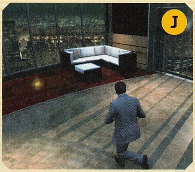
Ⓔ **.38 Revolver: part 2 of 3** Soon after passing through the trippy rainbow hallway, you'll be in a new lounge. Take out any enemies, then look for a staircase on the left side of the room. Go up the stairs and through the doors to enter the DJ booth, where you'll find this part. Ⓕ **Clue 3: Ex-Cop** After exiting the lounge, look to the stall doors on your left. The one in the middle will have a green handle. Approach it to trigger a cutscene. Ⓖ **Clue 4: Torn Dress Piece** This is in the same room as the stall where you found the ex-cop. Check the corner of the counter underneath the shattered mirror to find this clue. Ⓗ **Clue 5: Portuguese Newspaper** Clear the kitchen of enemies, then check the counter along the right wall for a newspaper.

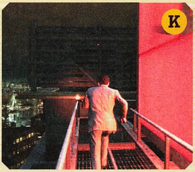
Chapter 2:
Continued on page 62

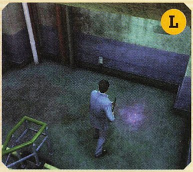
Chapter 2:

Continued from page 61









I **Mini-30: part 2 of 3** Upon entering the dining area, proceed counter clockwise around the room until you can get into the little central area. Here you'll find a gun part.

J **Mini-30: part 3 of 3** After the helicopter sequence, descend the stairs from the helipad and turn right. Go through the doors into a elevator lobby. Look on the ground to your left.

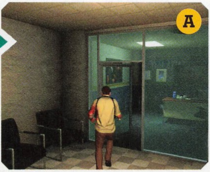
K **.38 Revolver: part 3 of 3** Run to the far end of the catwalk surrounding the giant red letters to find a part.

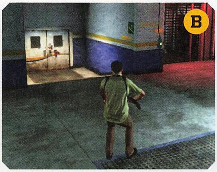
L **Clue 6: Giovanna's Necklace** As you leave the roof via the winding indoor staircase, you'll practically step on this clue.

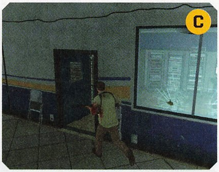
Chapter 3: Just Another Day at the Office

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 4

Scan the QR code to see it on video!
bit.ly/K3DxqO

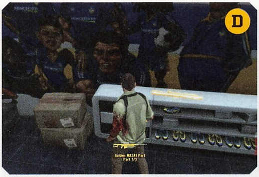


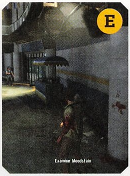


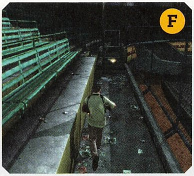


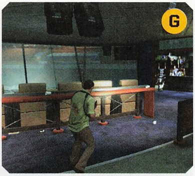
A **Clue 1: Picture of Victor** After you clear the indoor soccer field of thugs, turn around and enter the room next to the one you were patched up in. Inspect the picture on the wall for a clue. B **Clue 2: Blood Stained Door** Passos will be waiting for you near an elevator. Inspect the bloodstained door to the left of his position for a clue.

C **M10: part 1 of 3** Just after you find the wounded thug sitting on a folding chair, the room will fill with baddies. Kill them all, then check the camera room pictured above for a gun part.

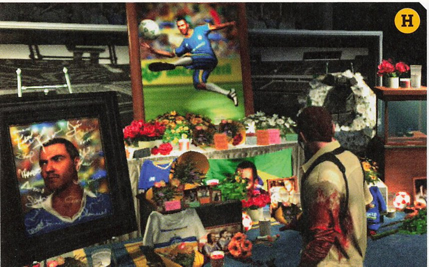


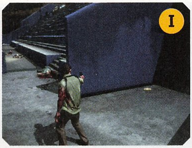


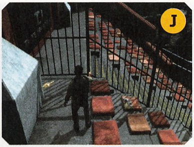




D **M82A1: part 1 of 3** After the battle in the gift shop, turn around and go back to this shelf, on top of which you'll find a part. Make sure to do this before following Passos, because you cannot backtrack to this spot once you do. E **Clue 3: Blood Stained Hallway** Just after sprinting past the sniper's view, wait silently with Passos until the enemies clear out. Then, inspect this bloody handprint on the column on the right side of the hallway. F **M10: part 2 of 3** After leaping out of the control room and taking out the baddies in front of you, turn around and go down the stands. Find this part in the lowest corner. G **M10: part 3 of 3** Once inside the VIP lounge, look to your left to find some seating in front of a viewing window. Check the front row for this part.





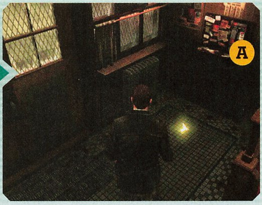


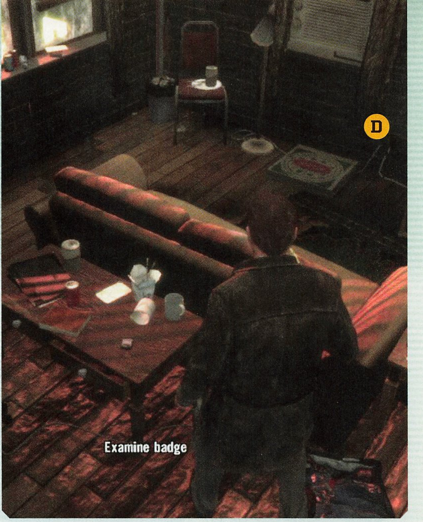
H **Clue 4: Soccer Star Memorial** This one is obvious: it's a massive memorial at the end of the VIP lounge, near the exit. I **M82A1: part 2 of 3** After exiting the elevator and stepping out onto the top portion of the stands, run down the steps in front of you and turn left to find a gun part tucked away. You should probably kill the guys to your right first, though. J **M82A1: part 3 of 3** After covering Passos and a long cutscene, you'll find yourself at the bottom of the stands. Run up the steps and hang a right when you reach the top row. At the end of the aisle, you'll find this last part.

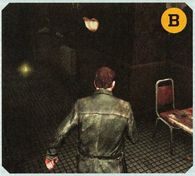
Chapter 4:
Anybody Can Buy Me a Drink

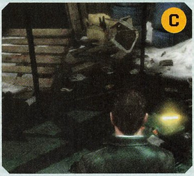
Gun parts: 9
Clues: 3

Scan the QR code to see it on video! bit.ly/KRAEuJ

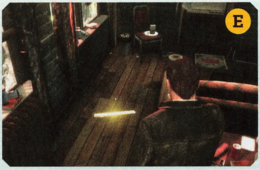


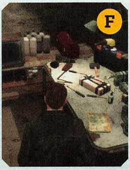


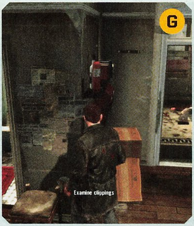


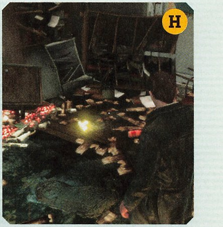


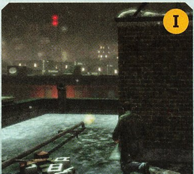
Ⓐ **1911: part 1 of 3** After the initial firefight, turn around, walk to the door, and turn right to find this part on the ground. Ⓑ **1911: part 2 of 3** To the left of the pool table is a staircase. Climb the steps and follow the path until you find another part near the restrooms. Ⓒ **1911: part 3 of 3** Just after the shootout in the parking lot, go back down the stairs leading into the bar to find the third 1911 part. Ⓓ **Clue 1: Max's NYPD Badge** Instead of leaving Max's apartment after the cutscene, walk over to the table behind the couch and check out his old badge. Ⓔ **M500: part 1 of 3** While still in Max's apartment, look on the floor between the couch and the window for this part. Ⓕ **Clue 2: Brewer's Journal** Enter Brewer's apartment and check the table with the tools on it for a clue. Ⓖ **Clue 3: Newspaper Clippings** From clue 2, simply turn around and investigate the newspaper clippings on the wall. Ⓗ **SAF 40 CAL: part 1 of 3** Run past the snipers until you reach the damaged area where Brewer blew himself up. Approach the stairs, but instead of heading up, turn right and check the room for a gun part. Ⓘ **M500: part 2 of 3** After emerging onto the roof, take out the baddies, then loop around to the right to find another part. Ⓙ **SAF 40 CAL: part 2 of 3** After the water tower sequence, a short cutscene with Passos will occur. Instead of following him afterwards, head in the opposite direction (your left) until you find this part. Ⓚ **M500: part 3 of 3** After the second firefight on the higher level of the abandoned apartment, Passos will call you over to the fire escape. Instead, turn around from where you entered this floor and search the scaffolding for a gun part. Ⓛ **SAF 40 CAL: part 3 of 3** After killing all the goons inside the chop shop, enter the office on the right. Go to the far end and check the desk on your left.

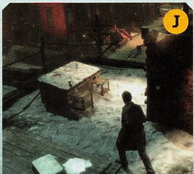


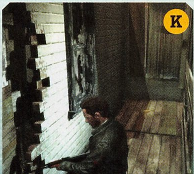


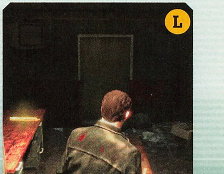








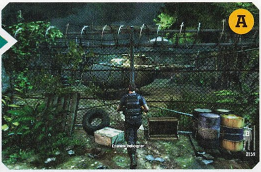


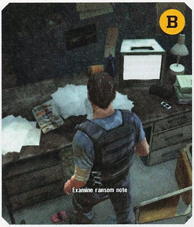


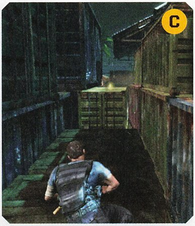
Chapter 5: Alive If Not Exactly Well

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 6

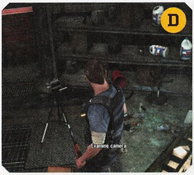
Scan the QR code to see it on video! bit.ly/L5lmVE

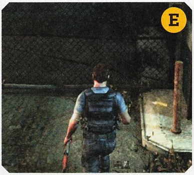


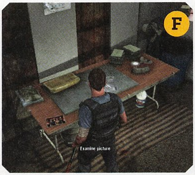


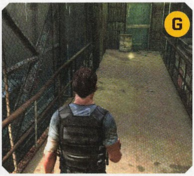


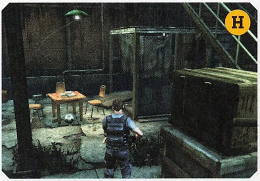
Ⓐ **Clue 1: Parked Helicopter** As soon as the level begins, walk forward and up to the fence in front of you. Examine the helicopter seen behind it for a clue. Ⓑ **Clue 2: Ransom Note** Upon entering the warehouse, Max will see a video playing, then engage in a firefight through a window. After the fight, turn around and check next to the TV. Ⓒ **Micro 9mm: part 1 of 3** After opening the garage door to an inviting gang of baddies, clear the area and look to the right for a brown crate in between two stacks of shipping containers. Climb onto this crate and grab the part. Ⓓ **Clue 3: Video Camera** After the cutscene where Max enters the warehouse in which Fabiana was held, examine the camera for a clue. Ⓔ **Micro 9mm: part 2 of 3** Exit the warehouse with the camera and stay to your right. Round the corner of the building and grab this part from the ground near a fence. Ⓕ **Clue 4: Branco Family Photo** After you fall from the boat and have a forced shootout inside the boathouse, look for the office. This clue is just inside on a desk. Ⓖ **Micro 9mm: part 3 of 3** Leave the office and turn left, climbing the nearest staircase. You'll find the part here.

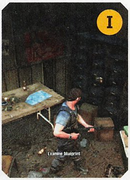


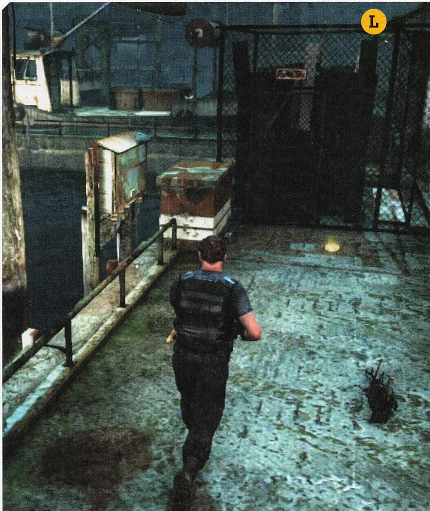




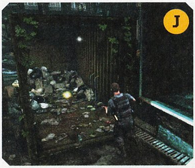


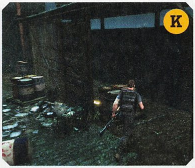






Ⓗ **Clue 5: Boathouse Newspaper** Upon entering the next warehouse you'll spot a small table. To the right of that table, you'll find a newspaper. Ⓘ **Clue 6: Nightclub Floor Plans** From where you found the newspaper, turn around and enter the office. Investigate the blueprints on the desk for a clue. Ⓙ **LMG .30: part 1 of 3** Leave the warehouse out the back exit (with the flashing light above it) and check the trash-filled container just outside. Ⓚ **LMG .30: part 2 of 3** After passing through the sliding gate, walk forward across the yard and into the small shed to find another part. Ⓛ **LMG .30: part 3 of 3** While on the docks, you'll reach a fork. Head left and follow the path back to the small shack for this part.

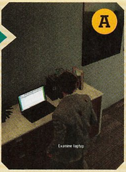


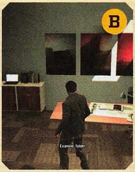


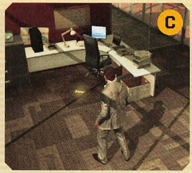
Chapter 6:
A Dame, a Dork, and a Drunk

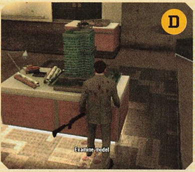
Gun parts: 3
Clues: 5

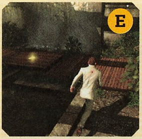
Scan the QR code to see it on video!
bit.ly/KSh6bd

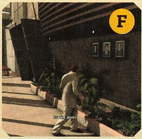


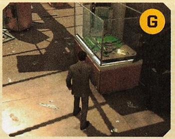


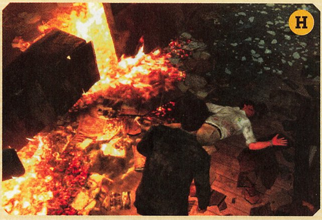












A **Clue 1: Rodrigo's Email** After the chapter's first gunfight and the resulting short cutscene, turn around and check the office with the three paintings on the wall. Check the laptop. **B** **Clue 2: File on Fabiana** While still in Victor's office, check his desk. **C** **MD-97L: part 1 of 3** From Victor's office, turn and enter the other, very similar office just across the way. If you look on the floor behind the L-shaped desk, you'll find a part. **D** **Clue 3: Architectural Models** Just after the second firefight, turn around and check out the model building with the helicopter on top. **E** **MD-97L: part 2 of 3** Just after the conversation between Max and Rodrigo, turn Max around. There's a gun part just behind him near the waterfall, one that you may have seen before the cutscene. **F** **Clue 4: School Picture** Soon after the conversation between Max and Rodrigo, you'll be running down a long hallway. Look on the right wall just after you pass the bathroom to find a series of photos. **G** **MD-97L: part 3 of 3** After the massive gunfight in the main lobby, turn around and look for the glass-encased building model. Next to the model is a part, so break the glass and grab it up. **H** **Clue 5: Dead IT Guy** Just after the disarm tutorial, walk forward and investigate the corpse of your friend.

Chapter 7:
A Hangover Sent Direct From Mother Nature

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 9

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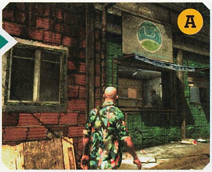
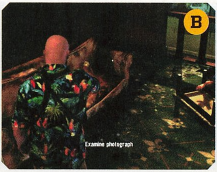
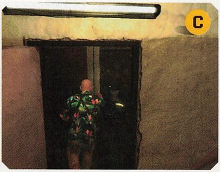
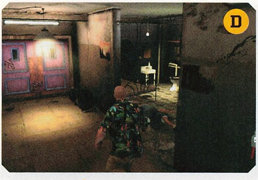
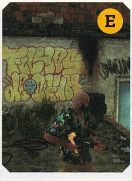
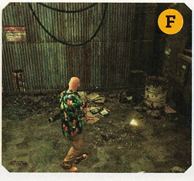


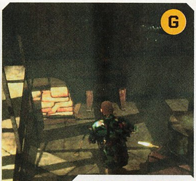










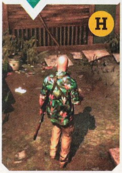


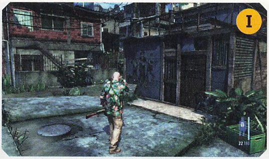
A **Clue 1: Ex-Cop** After you're disarmed, continue on and eventually you'll notice a window to your left with the sign labeled "Anjos Do Morro." Approach it to engage in conversation with the same ex-cop from chapter 2. **B** **Clue 2: Photo of Serrano** After speaking to Da Silva, clear the room of enemies, then return to the couch on which you were previously sitting. There is a photo there to investigate. **C** **Sawn-off: part 1 of 3** In this same room as clue 2, look for an open door just to the left of a wall painting of a stripper. There's a part inside this restroom. **D** **Clue 3: Tourist** Leave the main room and go down the hall. Enter the last room on the right before the pink double doors to find a man under a bed. **E** **Clue 4: Lower Gang Spray Tag** After a long battle through the slums, you'll finally reach a blue door with a padlock on it. To the left of this door is some graffiti. Examine it for a clue. **F** **Sawn-off: part 2 of 3** Immediately after exiting the small room containing the scoped weapon underneath the window, turn left to find a gun part on the ground. **G** **SPAS-15: part 1 of 3** After you've made your way from the ground floor of the warehouse to the second level on the other side, check behind some barrels

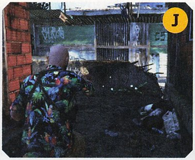
Chapter 7:
Continued on page 66

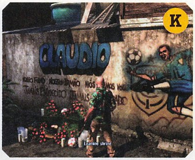
Chapter 7:

Continued from page 65

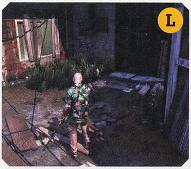


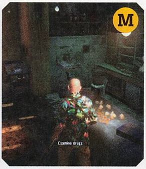


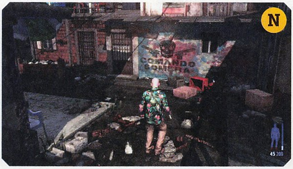


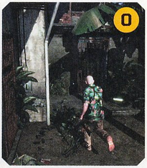


before going through the doorway to find a part on the ground. H **SPAS-15: part 2 of 3** After the cutscene in which Max mentions that the thugs seem to be getting tougher, run forward and to the right to check behind the low stack of wooden pallets. I **Clue 5: Middle Gang Spray Tag** From the previous gun part, run around to the front side of this small shack and inspect the graffiti of three men. J **SPAS-15: part 3 of 3** After climbing several sets of stairs, you'll spot a hooded figure in a white mask launching a flare into the air. It's at this point that you need to drop down through the crumbled section to your right, instead of the one on your left. K **Clue 6: Shrine to Claudio** Proceed on from where you found the above









gun part and you'll notice a giant memorial to Claudio on the side of a building. It's hard to miss this one. L **Clue 7: Flyer for Giovanna** This is on the ground just to the right of a graffiti-covered door leading inside. M **Clue 8: Bag of Oxidado** After clearing out the massive drug den, check this table for a clue. N **Clue 9: Upper Gang Spray Tag** Right after the scene in which Max blows up the drug den, you'll be facing this tag. Examine it for a clue. O **Sawn-off: part 3 of 3** You'll eventually be involved in a firefight involving Molotov cocktails. After the first area is safe, instead of proceeding up the short staircase, check the left side of it for the chapter's final gun part.

Chapter 8:
Ain't No Reprievement Gonna Be Found

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 3

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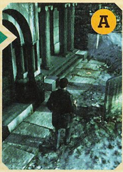
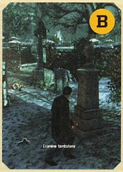
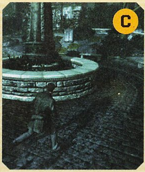
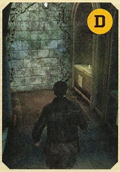
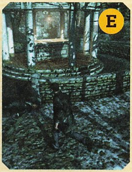
bit.ly/L3Fzse



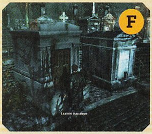


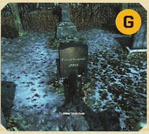


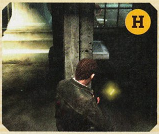


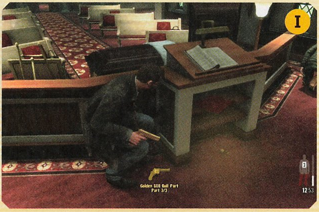


A **Auto 9MM: part 1 of 3** After the fight at the stairs involving the grenade launcher, go right instead of climbing the steps and check the ground in front of the furthest tomb. B **Clue 1: Valerie's Tombstone** Climb the steps and clear this upper area of baddies. Before joining Passos at the gate, check the tombstone with the urn on top. C **608 Bull: part 1 of 3** After the cutscene where Passos runs off, clear the area, but instead of following your partner, turn to the right of your starting position and check behind this structure. D **Auto 9MM: part 2 of 3** After you pass through the large double doors into the circular area with a large fountain, make an immediate right and follow the wall until the path ends. There on a shelf is a part. E **608 Bull: part 2 of 3** After you save Passos and clear the area, head behind the sarcophagus at the center of the area and look on the ground. F **Clue 2: Nicole's Mausoleum** From the body of the man who held Passos at gunpoint, head forward and to the left. Look for a mausoleum with a brown door and investigate it. G **Clue 3: Vinnie's Tombstone** Immediately after the cutscene with the shovel, turn slightly to your right. You'll notice a statue of an angel and a dark tombstone behind it. Examine that tombstone. H **Auto 9MM: part 3 of 3** From Clue 3, continue down the path leading to the morgue. When you're in front of the large building, turn left and enter the smaller house. Check the room with a sink. I **608 Bull: part 3 of 3** You can grab this part right after the cutscene in which you enter the church. Once you have control, nab the part under the podium.









Chapter 9:
Here I Was Again, Halfway Down the World

Gun parts: 6 Clues: 3

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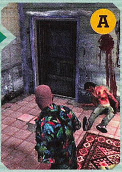

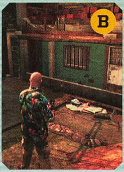

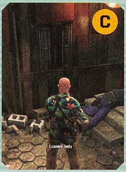

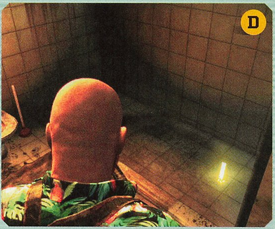

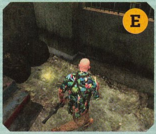

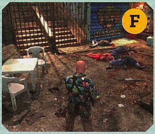

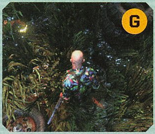

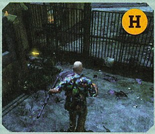

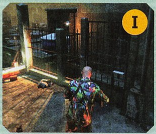

A **Clue 1: Dead Gang Members** After you climb some stairs and head inside for the first time in this chapter, you'll see a dead body in front of you. Examine it for a clue. B **DE .50: part 1 of 3** After your first fight with the cops, get to ground level and check in front of the white door pictured above to find a part. C **Clue 2: Dead UFE Members** Soon after that first fight with the cops, you'll be strolling down an alleyway when a civilian gets shot. Round the corner and kill the two cops. Afterwards, check the non-civilian body behind the dead cops. D **M972: part 1 of 3** You'll enter an apartment to find a scared woman inside. Check her bathroom's floor. E **M972: part 2 of 3** After the helicopter segment, you'll fall through a roof. Continue on down three short flights of steps. After the third, turn left to find this part on the ground. F **Clue 3: Dead Residents** Just after collecting the above part, you'll come upon three cops who kill a civilian. Kill the cops, and then check the civilian's body for a clue. G **DE .50: part 2 of 3** After the cutscene in which Max watches some cops moving a group of civilians, check the tall grass near some tires for another gun part. H **M972: part 3 of 3** From where you found the previous part, continue on. Once you step onto the concrete and see the flight of stairs in front of you, turn left. Follow this path to a gate and check the ground to the left of that gate for a part. I **DE .50: part 3 of 3** You'll eventually reach a part where two cops are walking across a narrow walkway. Kill them and the others that appear, then run across the walkway and through the gate you see in front of you. Turn right for a part.

Chapter 10:
It's Drive Or Shoot, Sister

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 2

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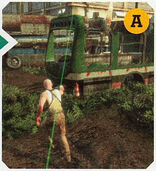

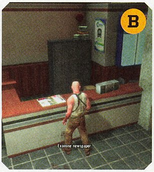

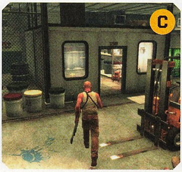

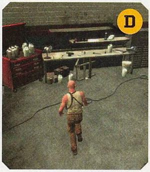

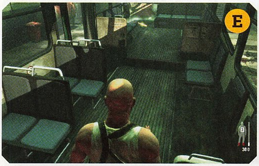

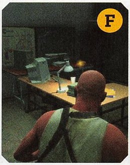

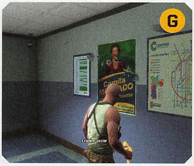

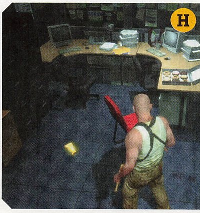

A **FN FAL: part 1 of 3** After the initial firefight, look for half of a green bus with its roof missing. You can take out the snipers before you run inside this bus and grab the part, or you can be dumb and get shot to death like we did. B **Clue 1: Office Newspaper** After the firefight near the gasoline pumps, enter the office with the red counter. Check inside for a newspaper. C **M4 Super 90: part 1 of 3** After swinging from the hook and clearing the room, a cutscene will take place. Just after this cinematic, look for the small room near the forklift. Here is where you'll find a part. D **M4 Super 90: part 2 of 3** After another protracted gun battle, Giovanna will lower some stairs for you. Instead of going towards them, turn around and find the workbench at the opposite end of the room. You'll find a part on that workbench. E **FN FAL: part 2 of 3** After clearing the enemies from the bus repair bay, enter the bus and grab the gun part from its floor. F **M4 Super 90: part 3 of 3** You'll eventually climb some stairs into a room full of cubicles. Enter the office in the corner and look on the desk. G **Clue 2: Ad Campaign Poster** Continue from the room full of cubicles down some stairs. Take out the enemy in front of you, then look to the wall on your right for a campaign poster. H **FN FAL: part 3 of 3** From where you found clue 2, enter the security office. Look on the floor behind the desk for the chapter's final gun part.

Chapter 11:
Sun Tan Oil, Stale Margaritas, and Greed

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 8

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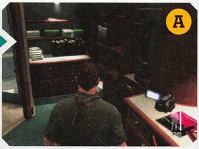
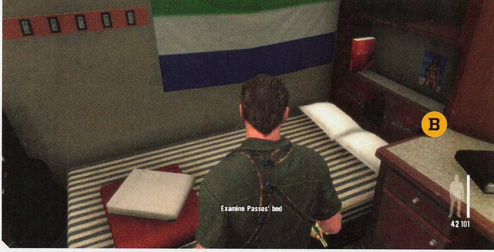
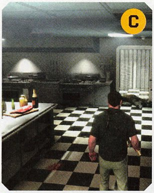
bit.ly/LlQ9x3

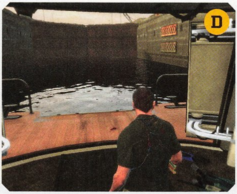


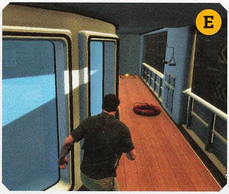


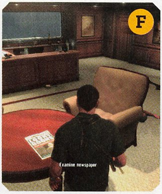
Ⓐ **Clue 1: Notes on Max** After killing the initial group of baddies, check the room across from Max's. There on a dresser, you'll find a note.

Ⓑ **Clue 2: Passos' Bed** From Max's room, head down the hall and enter the next room on your right. Investigate the bed for a clue.







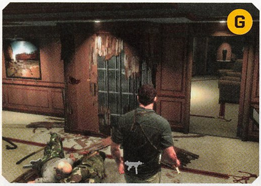


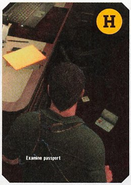
Ⓒ **Super Sport: part 1 of 3** Enter the kitchen through the right-hand entrance and proceed through the door with the plastic flaps, then immediately turn left and look at the ground.

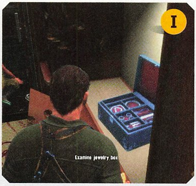
Ⓓ **Clue 3: Blood Trail** Just after you close the two fuel valves, you'll enter a room where a sliding door opens to reveal the Panama Canal. Observe the bloodstain on the deck for a clue.

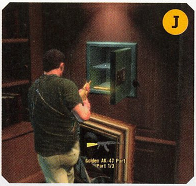
Ⓔ **Super Sport: part 2 of 3** Once outside, climb the stairs to the upper deck and take out the enemies. Instead of heading inside the gym, go around the right side for a part.

Ⓕ **Clue 4: Discarded Newspaper** After you enter the room where some thugs are trying to get through a wall, check the circular table in the middle of the room for a newspaper.







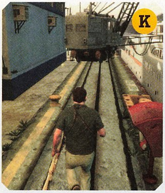


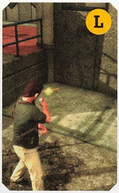
Ⓖ **Clue 5: Pried Wall** Simply inspect the torn-up wall in the room for another clue.

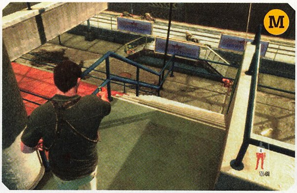
Ⓗ **Clue 6: Daphne's Passport** Leave the room where you found the last two clues and head down the hall. Enter the first door on your right and check the floor behind the desk.

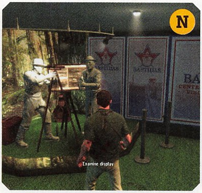
Ⓘ **Clue 7: Daphne's Jewelry Box** Go back to the hall and enter what would be the third door on your right if you started at the beginning of the corridor. Take out the enemies, then inspect the blue jewelry box near the bed.

Ⓙ **AK-47: part 1 of 3** From the helipad, head inside towards the bridge. Keep an eye to your left, looking out for a portrait of the captain. Shoot this portrait and the safe behind it to reveal a part.









Ⓚ **AK-47: part 2 of 3** After you meet up with Passos, you'll be caught up in a series of firefights. Once you can move freely, do not join Passos inside. Instead, turn around, sticking to the right-hand side. Backtrack far enough and you'll find this part.

Ⓛ **Super Sport: part 3 of 3** After you use the zipline, take out the immediate threat and then head around to the right side of the building. You'll find this part on the ground near the barbed-wire fencing.

Ⓜ **AK-47: part 3 of 3** After you open the security gate, head to the top of the stairs. Once at the top level, you'll notice another staircase to your right leading down – take it to find another part.

Ⓝ **Clue 8: Visitor Center Display** In the green room, inspect the display featuring two men.

Chapter 12:
The Great American Savior of the Poor

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 6

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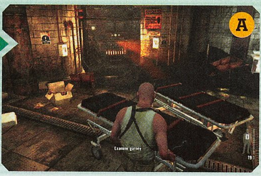

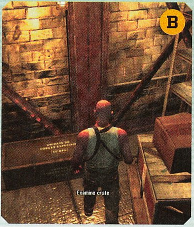

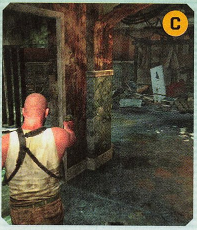

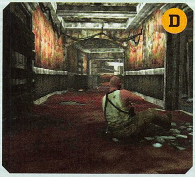

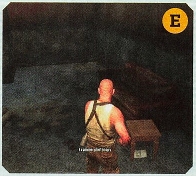

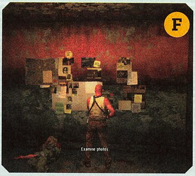

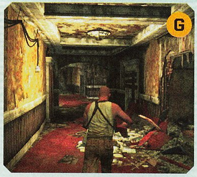

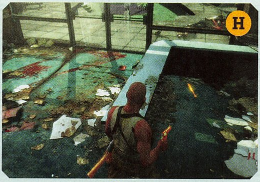

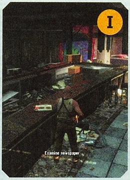

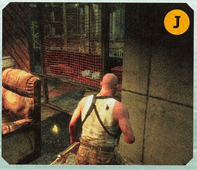

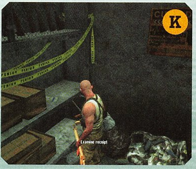

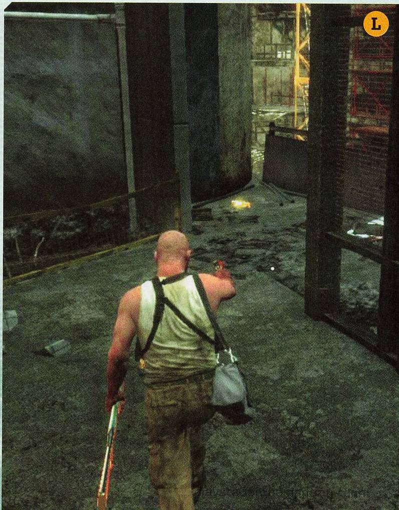

A **Clue 1: Gurney** After the short first cutscene involving the incinerator, move ahead and check the gurney. B **Clue 2: Ammo Crate** Leave the incinerator room through the double doors, walk into the first cage on your right and inspect the ammo crate. C **RPG: part 1 of 3** After a short elevator ride, you'll encounter two henchmen. Take them out (or don't) and check the nearby bathroom floor for this part. D **FMP G32: part 1 of 3** After passing through the yellow security gate, go down the left path and head down the hallway. Check the ground behind the cart for a gun part. E **Clue 3: Passos' ID Card** Climb out of the lower area where the floor dropped and up to the room on the right. You'll find Passos' ID next to a sofa, underneath a small side table. F **Clue 4: Wall Photos** The photos are in the same room where you found Clue 3. Just turn to the wall and inspect the obvious pictures. G **RPG: part 2 of 3** As you climb the stairs to the next level, Max will have another inner monologue. You'll emerge in a long hallway. As you proceed, look for a hole in the wall to your right that leads to a bathroom. There on the flooris a part. H **FMP G3S: part 2 of 3** Just after climbing up the elevator shaft, you'll have to take out some gunmen behind a small cart. After it's safe, move over to your right and check the ground behind the counter for another part. I **Clue 5: Newspaper Article** After passing the pool, you'll have to loop around to the left and re-enter the building from another entrance. Then look on the bar to your left for the newspaper. J **FMP G3S: part 3 of 3** After the cutscene with the doctor, you'll be in a new, larger room. Look for an armchair on the right side of this room, then check behind it. K **Clue 6: Donation Receipt** After you find the C4, a short cutscene will occur. Once you have control again, turn around and return to the small room where you found the C4. There's a receipt on the shelf. L **RPG: part 3 of 3** If you turn to your left from where you go into cover with the sniper rifle, you'll spot this part on another ledge close by. You'll need to enter the building and loop to the right to reach that ledge.

Chapter 13:
A Fat Bald Dude With a Bad Temper

Gun parts: 9
Clues: 7

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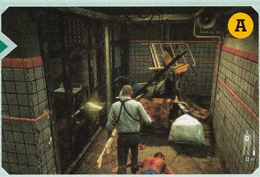
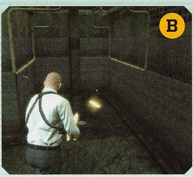
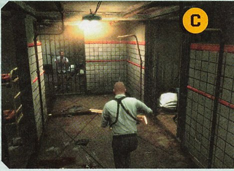
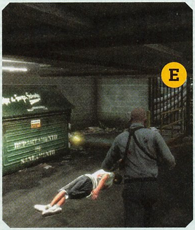
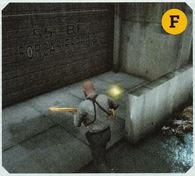


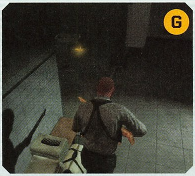


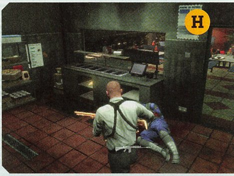


A MPK: part 1 of 3 After the short cutscene involving the prisoners and the cops, continue forward to the end of the hall. Turn left and grab the part from the cell door. **B LAW: part 1 of 3** After you grab the MPK part, continue down the hall and around the corner. Enter the shower room on your right to find another part on the ground. **C Clue 1: Tourist** Navigating the rest of the cellblock can be confusing, so you should kill all the enemies and reach the exit but don't leave. Instead, turn around, go down the hall, turn right, then right again. At the end of this hall you'll notice the tourist inside one of the cells. Talk to him for a clue. t

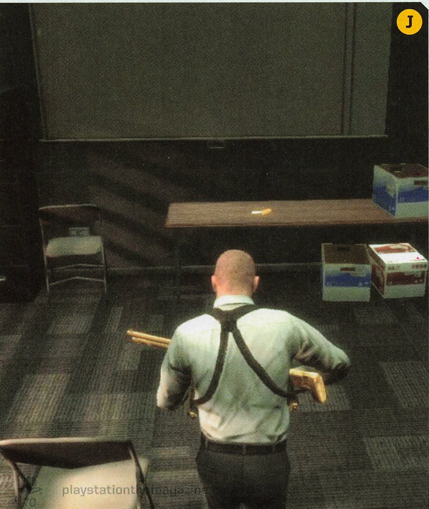


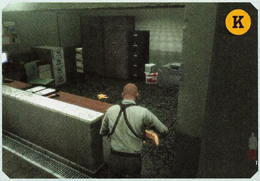


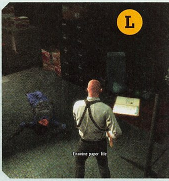




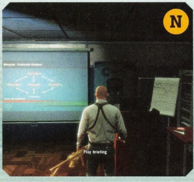
E LAW: part 2 of 3 As soon as you enter the parking garage (after blowing up the APC), look for the dumpster on the left wall. The part is just behind this dumpster. **F G6 Commando: part 1 of 3** After you climb some stairs and go back outside, you'll notice two guards with their backs turned to you. Take them out first if you want, then turn around and look for a short wall at the other end of the alley. Behind that wall is a part. **G MPK: part 2 of 3** Once inside the gym, look for the men's locker room (there are two entrances). Inside on the floor, you'll find a part. **H G6 Commando: part 2 of 3** Leave the gym and enter the kitchen. This part is behind the checkout counter.

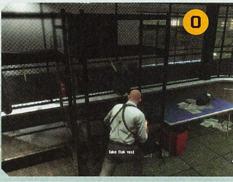




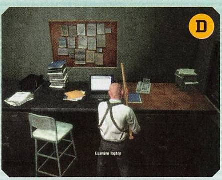


J MPK: part 3 of 3 Once you enter the atrium, check out the room on your left for a gun part. **K G6 Commando: part 3 of 3** After you collect the third part of the MPK, check out the office on the opposite end of the atrium. On the floor there will be a part. **L Clue 4: Political Folder** After clearing out the fifth floor, head back to where you initially took cover, for reference. Check the second office on the right. There on a desk you'll find an open file.

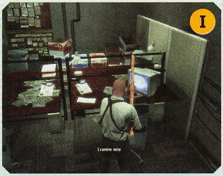




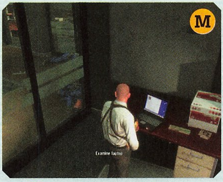
N Clue 6: Slide Show Once in the briefing room walk over to the podium and start the slide show. Flip through every single slide, and the clue will "unlock." **O Clue 7: Flak Vest** This clue/vest is hanging very close to the security door release button. It's hard to miss.



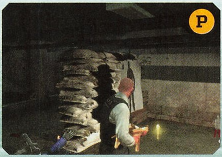
Ⓓ Clue 2: Prison Log Upon entering the security booth, walk just past the switch and investigate the laptop for a clue.



Ⓘ Clue 3: Promissory Note Exit the kitchen and enter the room labeled "Administracao," located just across from the café entrance. Look for a note inside this office on one of the desks.



Ⓜ Clue 5: E-File on Da Silva Again, from where you originally took cover on the fifth floor, look for the police logo on the far wall. Check the laptop in the office to the left of that logo for another clue.



Ⓟ LAW: part 3 of 3 As soon as you enter the firing range, you'll take cover behind a tall stack of sandbags. Clear the room of enemies and then check behind this stack for the chapter's last part.

Chapter 14:
One Card Left to Play

Gun parts: 6
Clues: 1

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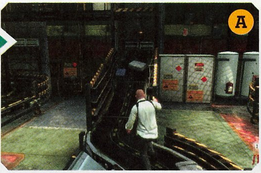
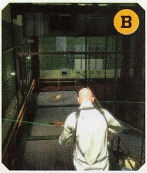
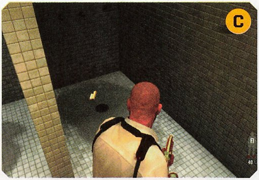
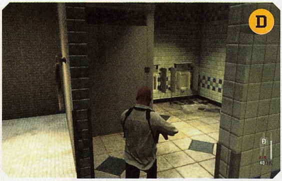
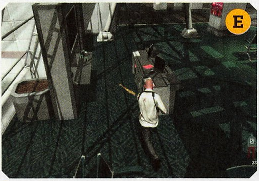


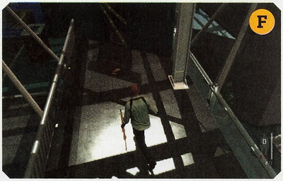


Ⓐ Grenade Launcher: part 1 of 3 You begin the chapter riding in on a luggage conveyor belt. Follow this belt around to where it ends to find a part. **Ⓑ Grenade Launcher: part 2 of 3** From ground level, head through the central room and up the stairs to the catwalks. Proceed until you're in another small room, then head through the double doors to your right to find another part.

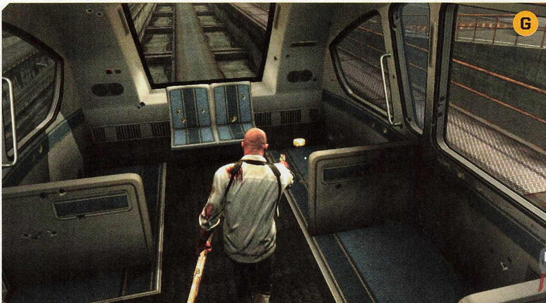








Ⓒ Grenade Launcher: part 3 of 3 As you walk down the office's narrow hallway, you'll notice doors on your right and left. The right door leads into the restroom; inside the shower stall is a part. **Ⓓ Clue 1: Ex-Cop** Look for the stall next to the showers and approach its door to trigger a cutscene. He won't be here if you haven't found his previous locations. **Ⓔ RPD: part 1 of 3** The departure lounge is a long area full of enemies. When it's safe, stick to the right side and run all the way to the other end. Behind gate 17's counter is a part. **Ⓕ RPD: part 2 of 3** Head up the escalators to the balconies above the departure lounge. Backtrack to the point that overlooks the lounge's entry point to find a part. **Ⓖ RPD: part 3 of 3** After the cinematic leap from one train car to another, kill the three thugs, then turn around and run to the end of the train for the game's final collectible.



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PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Reviews

Your essential guide to new releases

In any artistic medium, there exists a constant struggle between style and substance, but within the world of videogames, that conflict seems especially pronounced. Oftentimes games that are technically proficient lack any kind of creativity, while games that pour on the personality suffer from programming glitches and baffling design decisions that hamper the entire experience.

The question to every game then becomes, on which side of the fence do you land? Can you forgive shoddy design if you fall in love with the world? Can a well-executed shooter be fun even if you've played a dozen others just like it? Ultimately, it boils down to personal preference, but clearly some sort of balance has to exist.

When we review games, we always try to embrace whatever a particular game does well. Yet in some cases (like, say, *Lollipop Chainsaw*), we may not love the style enough to forgive the gameplay flaws. For us, that elusive balance tips too heavily toward style. But maybe for you, the gameplay won't matter. Just ask yourself: style or substance?

GRAVITY RUSH

Isaac Newton was a pretty smart guy, but even he couldn't figure out why gravity is always in such a hurry. It's not like it ever goes anywhere different.

INVERSION

Speaking of gravity, screw you, gravity! We're going to borrow a bunch of alien technology and totally make you work for us. No more falling apples!

RESISTANCE: BURNING SKIES

Would it make us terrible PlayStation fans if we pointed out that this game's subtitle initials are BS? You'd think someone would have noticed that earlier.

How we score our reviews...

10 Awesome
Instant classic that's nearly PlayStation perfection.

9 Excellent
Highly recommended and a great investment.

8 Great
Wonderful yet possesses minor flaws.

7 Good
Enjoyable but with definite room for improvement.

6 Acceptable
A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Mediocre
A game that's both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Flawed
Too flawed to be anything more than a curiosity.

3 Poor
A seriously defective game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful
A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it like the plague.

1 Raw Sewage
Apparently, feces *can* be pressed on a disc.

GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
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Our Highest Accolade
The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics, and profound appeal.

KNIGHT

Romero
KNIGHTS

Lollipop Chainsaw

It's going to take more than a few cheers to fix this

San Romero cheerleader Juliet Starling is having a rough 18th birthday. Her high school has been taken over by ravenous undead, her boyfriend was bitten by a zombie while trying to defend her, and, possibly worst of all, she totally has the most ginormous butt of all time (or at least that's what she complains about every few minutes). Luckily, she's astonishingly well-prepared for this shocking turn of events: Juliet comes from a family of zombie hunters, so she's unfazed when her peers turn into brain-eating psychopaths. She doesn't even bat a beautiful eyelash when she has to start slaying zombified versions of her fellow cheerleaders—in fact, she thinks it's kind of sexy. She just breaks out her pink chainsaw, casts a spell on her boyfriend's severed head to keep it alive (and attached to her waist like a purse), and sets off to save the day.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** Warner Bros. Interactive Ent. **Dev** Grasshopper Manufacture **Price** $59.99 **ESRB** Mature **It's like** every 13-year-old boy's fantasy.

Lollipop Chainsaw comes from the minds of game designer Suda51 (known for *Shadows of the Damned* and *No More Heroes*) and Hollywood's James Gunn (writer of the *Dawn of the Dead* remake and *Slither*), so we were completely ready for an insane adventure. What we got, however, was even more bizarre than we could ever have imagined—and believe us, we were prepared for some freaky stuff—and, sadly, disappointing in ways we weren't expecting.

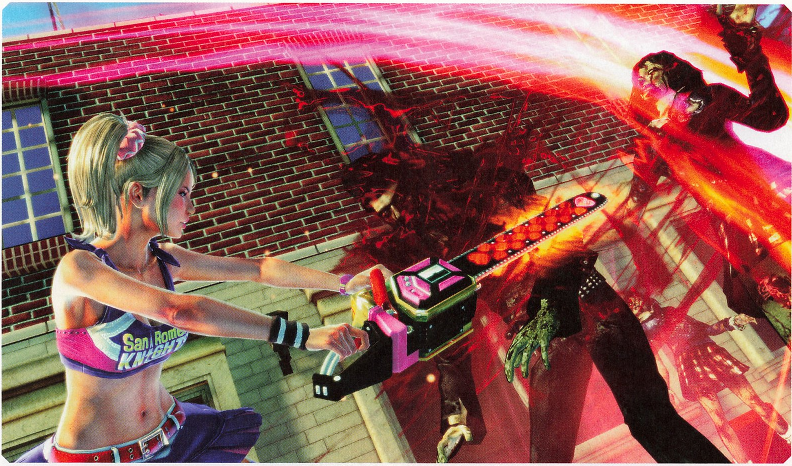
Each of the game's different areas is themed for the zombie lord that presides over it, making for some wickedly varied level design and even crazier boss battles. And while there was a story filled with characters and cutscenes and other stuff we expected, we loved how little emphasis the developers put on actually keeping it rational. The seemingly deliberate lack of coherence was not only charming, but actually made it easier to swallow the admittedly strange situation we were thrown into: An emo/goth/punk kid cast an ancient spell to open a portal between Earth and the "Rotten World," and it's up to a scantily clad high school cheerleader to cut those responsible into tiny, bloody pieces, or else the portal will remain open forever.

Want More?

If you're looking for more zombie hunting on PS3, check out Dead Rising 2 or House of the Dead: Overkill. Both will provide plenty of bodies to break into tiny chunks of undead flesh.

Why do we need to knock zombie heads into a basketball hoop for a game of "zombie basketball?" Why is the arcade level filled with Pac-Man—

▸▸



Every single attack bends Juliet into...alluring poses.

like minigames? Why does eating lollipops replenish Juliet's health? Because it's fun, silly, and sexy! That's all that matters in *Lollipop Chainsaw*. The game focuses on keeping the player entertained at all times with witty dialogue (that waivers between genuinely hilarious and "Wow, did my creepy uncle write this?"), over-the-top gameplay (that's about as absurd as any game we've ever played), and so much sex appeal we felt like we needed to take a cold shower after every single level. The game never takes itself too seriously, and that led to a lighthearted experience that we absolutely wanted to fall in love with. It's brave in its ridiculousness, and we were constantly amazed at the different, completely arbitrary segments we were pulled through.

Let's Go Shopping

From Juliet's hyperkinetic little sister to her masculine, Chuck Norris/Elvis Presley-inspired father, we were constantly being thrown into meetings with strange new characters and being pushed into ludicrous scenarios. Each crazy sibling tossed Juliet a birthday present that, luckily, took the form of a tool that would make sawing down zombies even easier. She'd also receive the occasional addition to the "Nick Roulette" wheel, an option that triggered a minigame that allowed us to unleash a strange power that would, in some way, involve boyfriend Nick's severed head. It's absurd, demented, and whimsically awesome.

We were also able to upgrade her items and moves in a more traditional sense by earning coins for slaying multiple zombies at once. Trapping three or more in one powerful swing would cause coins to spill all over the level, and we could use them to buy new abilities or outfits. These multi-kills would also give us an excuse to replay levels if we wanted to. Since the entire game is scored, replaying levels to earn higher scores should provide some fun replayability

Dressed for Success Five outrageous unlockable outfits

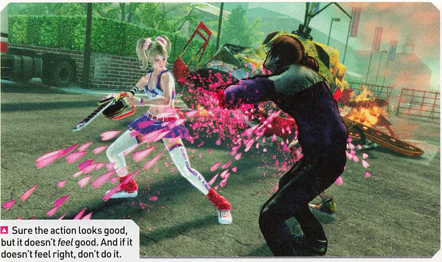
Date Night Outfit
In case you want her to be a little more conservatively dressed

Bunny Costume
Because there's nothing sexier than a girl dressed like a bunny

Striped Bikini
Just, you know, in case there are zombies on the beach

Miyamoto Rei
One of many decidedly anime-inspired outfits

Shiro Costume
An insane, skin-tight getup perfect for bloody brawls



Sure the action looks good, but it doesn't *feel* good. And if it doesn't feel right, don't do it.

We're not going to complain about random pole dancing.

for anyone interested in taking Juliet on a second date through the game.

The Big But(t)

And yet, despite its delicious sexiness and surreal world, the game doesn't completely work. At no time does *Lollipop Chainsaw* feel right (and we don't mean morally). There's just something *off* about it, and unfortunately, the flaws lie not in its fantastical premise but in technical follies we thought we'd left behind on PS2.

Too often, *Lollipop Chainsaw* feels more like a last-gen game in current-gen lingerie than a truly modern experience. Thanks to abundant camera issues, we often struggled more with Juliet focusing on the wrong enemy than we did with the undead horde itself. What's worse, stringing together combos—an area in which we expected the game to excel—was stiffer than we would have liked. Juliet's attacks were never fluid, never natural.

Instead, tapping a button on the controller had us locked into an attack whether we wanted to execute it or not, and though we would...erm...quite enjoy watching Juliet in action, we never had the control we wanted. It wasn't difficult by any means, it just wasn't fulfilling when we'd essentially buttonmash from one encounter to the next. Other last-gen issues, like an overabundance of quick time events and incessant load times, further broke up the experience.

Give Me a Z!

The gameplay is also a hopeless mishmash of ideas, and some of the mechanics feel like they were shoehorned into the game for the sole purpose of giving players more things to do. Occasionally being forced to shove Nick's head onto a pre-decapitated zombie's corpse and then "cheer" for him as he bashed open doors simply wasn't necessary and just added fluff to an already confused game. Other segments were so scripted that we barely felt in control. Believe us, we're not going to complain about random instances of pole dancing (because it was part of her zombie-killing training or...something), but they were often so forced that it felt like we were being pulled through the game on a string instead of actually experiencing it for ourselves. Let us shove Nick's head on random bodies to help take down large enemies, and let us pole dance *when* we want to, *where* we want to. We need that freedom for these mechanics to contribute in a meaningful way.

We were constantly waiting for the moment where it would click, for the missing element that would make it feel on par with games like *Devil May Cry* or *God of War*. But it never came, no matter how much we wished for it. Instead, we were left tapping the face buttons in hopes that we'd simply trip through the combat, and usually that's exactly what happened. Don't get us wrong—watching Juliet dash across the battlefield, chainsaw in hand, was entertaining in its own right. We just wish more emphasis was placed on making it fun to play and not just fun to watch.

HOLLANDER COOPER

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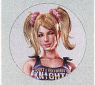
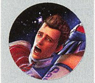
Cast List

THE STARLET



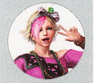
Juliet Starling
She's fun, hot, and knows how to use a chainsaw.

THE BOYFRIEND



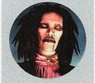
Nick Carlyle
Juliet's bodiless boy-toy is head-over-everything for her.

THE SISTER

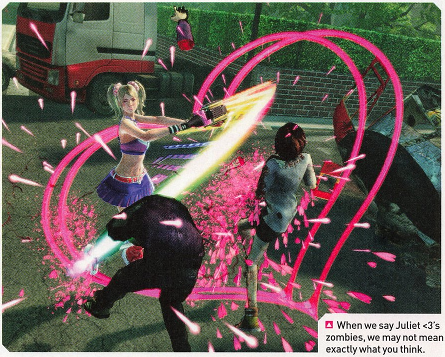


Rosalind Starling
She'll make your insane younger sister look like a saint.

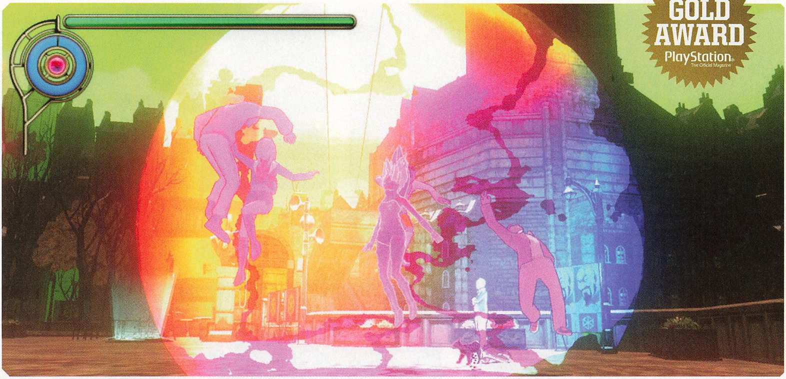
THE VILLAIN



Swan
No one understands him—what an original reason to be evil.

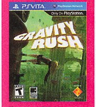


When we say Juliet <3's zombies, we may not mean exactly what you think.



GOLD AWARD
PlayStation
The Official Magazine

Info



Format PS Vita
Pub SCEA
Dev SCE Japan Studio
Price $39.99
ESRB Teen
It's like an anime/steampunk *inFamous* with controlled falling instead of lightning powers.

Gravity Rush

Let's go fly a Kat

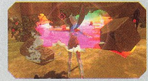
If the quality of an open-world game is measured by how much fun it is to get around its world, then *Gravity Rush* is one of the greatest open-world games ever made. Set in a soaring steampunk metropolis called Hekseville that floats high above a swirling "gravity storm," *Rush* centers on Kat, an amnesiac girl who can shift her own gravity in different directions. This enables her to walk on walls and ceilings or "fly" by falling upward for as long as her power gauge holds out.

With Kat's powers at our disposal, Hekseville becomes explorable from literally every angle. Impervious to falling damage, we can launch her high above its rooftops, rocket horizontally through its streets, or stroll upside-down in the city's vertigo-inducing underside. Activating Kat's power starts her floating in place, at which point we can aim her in any direction using the Right stick, the tilt sensors, or both to start her falling. She can't change direction mid-fall, but we *can* stop and re-aim her whenever we want to head in a different direction. As a way to traverse the city, it's challenging, unique, and immensely fun, and it delivers an exhilarating sense of freedom on par with open-world classics like *Crackdown* and *Spider-Man 2*.

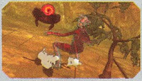
Falling With Style

At the same time, traversing the world as Kat is not without its problems. Given the large number of smaller objects and outcroppings that jut unexpectedly into the average flight path, being able to stick to walls can make things suddenly disorienting. And while the motion controls are useful for fine-tuning our aim, they're difficult to get used to in some cases. For example, the only way to steer Kat when she executes a rail-grind-like "Gravity Slide" along whatever surface she's standing on is by holding a thumb on each of the screen's bottom corners and then tilting the Vita. Also, making us swipe a finger across the screen to dodge enemy attacks is a neat idea but one that's tricky to

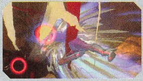
Kat's secondary powers Stick it to the Nevi in style



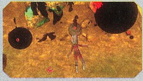
STASIS FIELD
Lift and throw heavy objects (and people).



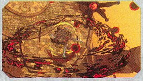
GRAVITY SLIDE
Rail-grind on any surface to get around faster.



SPIRALING CLAW
Homing charge hurts every nearby Nevi.

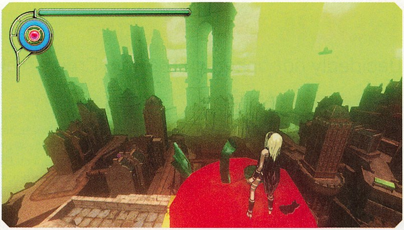


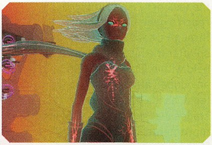
GRAVITY TYPHOON
Warp in boulders to hurl at enemies.



MICRO BLACK HOLE
Absorbs anything caught in its radius.

△ Kat slowly tumbles head-over-heels as she floats though the air, driving home the feeling that she's falling in different directions, rather than flying.



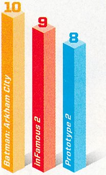


△ Kat's powers actually come from her shadowy cat, Dusty. When they're activated, Kat goes all transparent and glowy.

remember in the heat of battle.

Shifting gravity isn't Kat's only power, which is great because Hekseville needs a savior who can do more than fly. She's also a capable fighter, able to bust out martial arts combos, deliver gravity-propelled flying kicks, telekinetically pick up and hurl heavy objects, and eventually unleash devastating super attacks.

These talents come in handy pretty quickly because the city's under siege by shadowy creatures called Nevi, who may be connected with the disappearance of several district-sized chunks of the city. The amorphous Nevi vary wildly in shape, size, and toughness, ranging from small blob-like creatures to huge dragon-like monsters, but they all have one thing in common: round, glowing weak points that shatter with a few well-placed kicks. Sometimes there's a trick to revealing these (mainly during boss fights), but once they're visible, they're easy to smash.



ScorePole

Gravity Rush is Vita's first free-roaming superhero adventure, and it already stands with PS3's best.

Islands in the Sky

While combat's fun, it's really the city and the story that take center stage here. Hekseville's fairly small to start, but as Kat progresses through the narrative and restores its three missing districts, it becomes a massive, seamless cloud city that's a blast to explore. (It's also far from the only huge environment in the game, but that's something best learned firsthand.) Built out vertically as well as horizontally, each mazelike district is multi-tiered and filled with endless, out-of-the-way nooks and crannies littered with collectible clusters of purple gems, which, in addition to being really fun to hunt down, enable Kat to level up her abilities. Each district also possesses its share of unique architecture, rendered in a beautifully detailed, hand-drawn style that makes the landmarks almost as interesting to look at as they are to jump around on.

We spent a *lot* of time jumping around on them, too. Told largely through motion-comic cutscenes (which feature minimal voice acting in a made-up, quasi-French language), the story's surprisingly meaty, taking us more than 17 hours to plow through. Some of that was padded out by meaningless races and other side challenges that Kat can pursue for gems, as well as just-long-enough-to-be-annoying load times, but the bulk of the campaign consists of memorably surreal missions, interesting story twists, and a likable cast of fairly strange characters. There've been a few games that have made owning a Vita worthwhile, but *Gravity Rush* is the first to make it absolutely *essential*.

MIKEL REPARAZ

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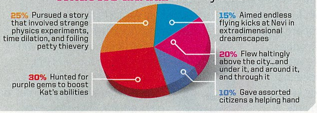
What we did in... Gravity Rush



Rock of Ages

Decidedly *not* based on the Tom Cruise flick

Info
Format PSN **Pub** Atlus USA
Dev ACE Team
Price $9.99 **ESRB** Everyone 10+
It's like tower defense with a classical twist.

Carefully rolling a sphere down a series of winding paths might sound a bit like *Super Monkey Ball*, but the task here isn't simply to reach a goal—it's to smash through a castle gate and splatter the historical figure held within. *Rock of Ages* is an oddball affair, to say the least, as it's packed with stages inspired by classical art movements, hilarious Monty Python-esque cinematics starring ancient rulers, and clever pop-culture allusions.

The gameplay's also highly entertaining in its own right, as we must command our rolling boulders down treacherous pathways peppered with hazards placed by the AI or an online/splitscreen opponent. Between rolls, we have a chance to place our own hazards, like crossbows, towers, wind machines, and animals, in our opponent's path, which can quite literally slow their roll and mitigate the impact of the eventual collision with our own castle gate.

Unfortunately, it's not always a smooth experience: The close-up camera proves claustrophobic, and the tower defense-like hazard placement segments are imprecise and tough to navigate. Still, *Rock of Ages* is a true original and remains quite amusing despite some awkward elements. **ANDREW HAYWARD**

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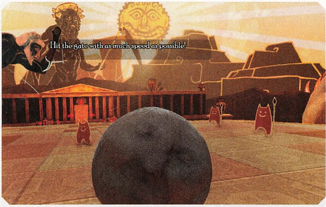
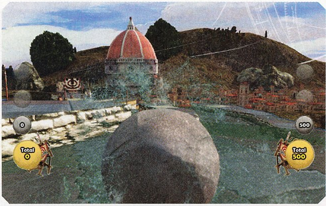
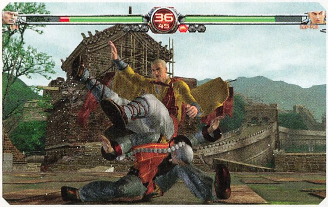
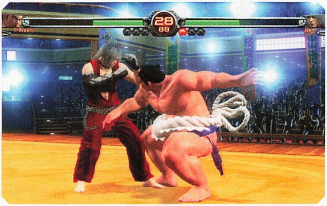


The stages' distinct art styles are pulled from five classic eras: Ancient Greece, Medieval, Renaissance, Rococo, and Goya.







No fireballs, no weapons, just good old-fashioned beatdowns.

Virtua Fighter 5 Final Showdown

Still in fighting form

Info
Format PSN
Pub Sega
Dev Sega-AM2
Price $14.99
ESRB Teen
It's like sparring with an old partner who hasn't missed a step.

It may seem strange that Sega has waited five years to release the definitive edition of *Virtua Fighter 5*, but the phrase "better late than never" has never been more appropriate, as *Final Showdown* arrives as one of the strongest 3D fighters ever.

Showdown adds two characters—Jean Kujo and returning sumo Taka-Arashi—but, more importantly, introduces online play. The game also includes an excellent Dojo mode that explains the game's basic systems and characters. Frame data for every move and viewable combo recordings help make this one of the strongest fighting-game tutorials yet.

It says a lot that, despite the five-year gap, *Showdown* still plays wonderfully. With only three buttons, the fighting mechanics may seem simple, but the gameplay here can be extremely deep and rewarding. As a $15 stand-alone download, *Showdown* is an absolute steal. Any fighting game fan will have hours of fun, and the extensive tutorials lay out a much-needed welcome mat for newcomers. **MICHAEL GRIMM**

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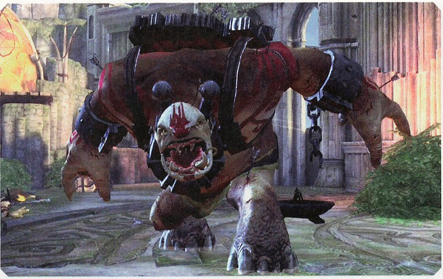

Sorcery

Showing Harry Potter how it's done

Calling *Sorcery* the PlayStation Move's killer app doesn't give the game ample credit, considering the peripheral's lackluster line-up. Leaps and bounds better than most of the Move's library, *Sorcery* isn't just a good motion-controlled game, it's a good PS3 game.

As Finn, a sorcerer's apprentice, we wield the Move controller like a magic wand. While maneuvering the Harry Potter-like hero with the navigation controller, we best beasties, solve puzzles, mix potions, and collect items by harnessing the arcane arts behind the bulbous Move wand. Favoring intuitive mechanics over frustrating arm-flailing, *Sorcery's* spellcasting hook is as accessible as it is addictive. Responsive wrist flicks and subtle gestures unleash a variety of slick on-screen effects. Whether blasting away at a towering beast with Finn's default bolt attack or mimicking shaking and sipping moves to consume a potion, armchair adventurers will feel fully immersed in this fairytale world.

Progressing through the story unlocks better abilities and the power to mix and match elemental magic. From imbuing enemy-consuming cyclones with fire to freezing and shattering targets, there's no shortage of stylish ways to slay *Sorcery's* monsters and minions. Solving simple puzzles and customizing Finn with concocted potions isn't as much fun as pummeling foes with magic, but they do add some variety to the experience.

A simple but engaging narrative nicely complements the combat, succeeding largely on the appeal of the leading characters. Likeable and packed with personality, Finn and his talking feline Erline wouldn't be out of place in their own Pixar film. While we'd happily follow this pair anywhere, the enemies and environments didn't pull us in with the same enthusiasm. The fantasy world's vibrant and its monsters are appropriately ugly, but both generally feel a bit too familiar and generic. Minor gripes aside, *Sorcery* offers up an absorbing adventure and fluid spell-casting controls, making it the most fun we've had behind the Move and a must-play for wizard wannabes of all ages. **MATT CABRAL**

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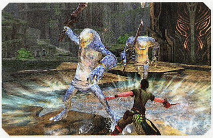
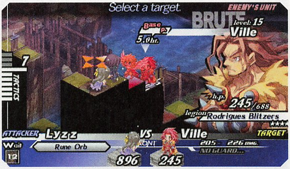


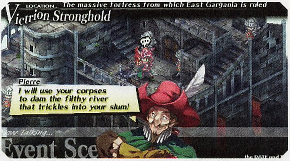
Mixing powerful elemental spells, such as fire and whirlwind, results in a literal blast of baddie-barbecuing magic.

Info

Format PS3 **Pub** SCEA
Dev The Workshop
Price $39.99 **ESRB** Teen
It's like the best reason to dust off your Move setup.



These cute warriors are headed into a grim-as-hell adventure.


LOCATION... The massive fortress from which East Gargania is ruled
Victrion Stronghold
Pierre
I will use your corpses to dam the filthy river that trickles into your slum!
Event Sce

Gungnir

Blood, betrayal, and big heads

By the standards of developer Sting's "Dept. Heaven" game collection, *Gungnir* is oddly conventional. It isn't a bizarre genre hybrid like *Knights in the Nightmare* or a mutant dating sim like *Riviera*. It's practically an ordinary strategy-RPG. *Final Fantasy Tactics* addicts should almost feel right at home. Almost.

Gungnir has enough quirks to remind us who made it, led by a cool free-form initiative system. Any unit can move and attack when the player's turn comes up (they don't follow the usual everyone-takes-a-turn sequence), which puts more power in our hands as far as deciding whom to use and when. Taking advantage of that flexibility naturally calls for deeper thinking, so graduate-level strategy fans should enjoy the challenge.

Enjoying the story is a less certain proposition. *Gungnir* features a weird clash between super-cute cartoon visuals and a script full of blood and backstabbing. Each of these would work fine independent of the other. Put them together, though, and both elements feel out of place. It's not enough to bring the experience down too far, but Sting's next game could benefit from a slightly less split personality. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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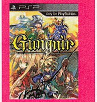
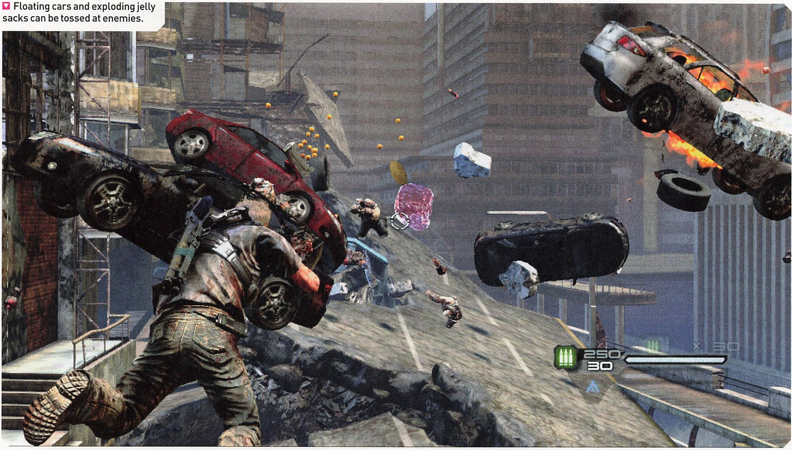
Info



Format PSP
Pub Atlus USA
Dev Sting
Price $29.99
ESRB Teen
It's like *Tactics Ogre*, kind of... but...not.



Floating cars and exploding jelly sacks can be tossed at enemies.

Inversion

Cover shooting goes head over heels

On so many levels, *Inversion* is like a cheesy action movie. We can almost hear the trailer: "Just an ordinary guy..."—who happens to have biceps the size of locomotive pistons—"...thrust into extraordinary circumstances..."—which is certainly one way of describing an invasion by bloodthirsty aliens who have somehow gained mastery over the laws of gravity. "He decided to fight back..."—by slaughtering the rampaging hordes almost single-handedly, no biggie—"... to try to save his family..."—and the whole world. Don't forget that last bit.

The similarities continue with regard to the laughably clichéd script as well as some of the set pieces (do you think that precariously balanced bus might come crashing down just as we walk past it?). Yet just as there's some joy in losing ourselves to the *Under Siege* movies, *Inversion* has undeniable charm once we switch our brain to "simple."

Free Fallin'

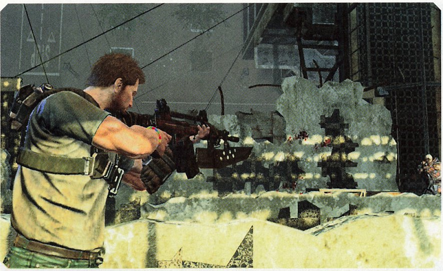
By and large, it plays like every middling cover shooter from the past five years, with a nod to *Gears of War* that's so pronounced it likely gave itself neck strain. The beefy characters are almost as wide as they are tall yet can roll and dive around cover like Russian gymnasts, and the chunky weapons have nice big blades on the front. Most of the game plays out similarly—snap to cover, roll about a bit, break open some alien heads, proceed—and while it doesn't have the sharpness or impact of the likes of *Uncharted* or *Max Payne*, the mechanics are all solid enough. Boss battles, which manage to avoid being a chore thanks to their brevity and the odd varied objective, also help to keep interest levels up.

The twist, of course, is the game's gravity bending. Using the alien tech Gravlink, we can lift enemies out of cover, levitate and then throw objects, or invoke "heavy" mode to bring things

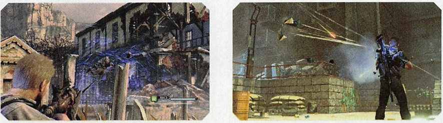
Info

PS3
INVERSION
M
namco

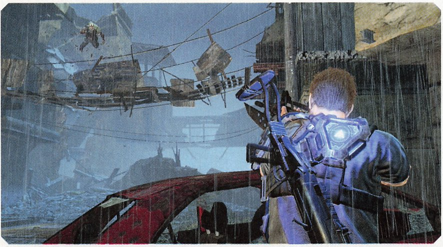
Format PS3
Pub Namco Bandai
Dev Saber Interactive
Price $59.99
ESRB Mature
It's like flushing a dozen old cover shooters out of an airlock.



▲ Everything seems easier when equipped with enormous triceps and a friendship bracelet.



▼ Aside from its gravity tricks, *Inversion* plays much like any other cover shooter.



crashing down from the ceiling. It's not quite enough to elevate *Inversion* above the pack, but it does allow for some enjoyable experimentation and different advancement options. Our Gravlink also gets upgraded as the game goes on, enabling us to fling bigger objects—such as cars—in true Magneto fashion.

Ups and Downs

The 12-player multiplayer offering is somewhat confused. Robust regenerating health means that firefights last more than a few seconds and can evolve into cat-and-mouse affairs (or degenerate into hysterical circle-strafing mania), which is definitely a good thing. The gravity mechanic has also been incorporated well, with modes that give more points for Grav-assisted kills or place only one Gravlink on the map. The real problem is that there's absolutely no atmosphere—the whole thing sounds akin to playing in a library or at the bottom of the sea.

After a number of delays, it's good that *Inversion* is seeing the light of day, and despite its deeply underwhelming visuals and copy/paste formula, solid implementation of both the basic mechanics and the titular hook means it floats our boat even if we're not flipping out. **JAMES COATES**

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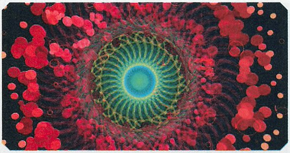
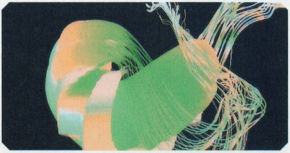


▲ Wield a second wand for additional mixing magic, or recruit another player for some cooperative music making.



PixelJunk 4am

Making music with the Move

Info

Format PSN
Pub SCEA
Dev Q-Games
Price $9.99
ESRB Everyone
It's like a legally induced psychedelic trip.

Unlike any of Q-Games' previous *PixelJunk* entries, *4am's* a cross between thatgamecompany's *fl0w* and Rockstar's *Beaterator*. Combining the sense-soothing experiences of the former with some of the music-mixing abilities of the latter, it's an odd but absorbing beast that'll appeal to anyone seeking artistic interactivity over reflex-taxing gameplay.

Wielding the Move controller, we adopt a fairly free-form approach to producing joyful noise while stimulating on-screen imagery pulses and swirls in time. The Move wand's buttons allow us to swap between different tracks, such as rhythm, bass, and percussion, while waving and gesturing with the wand lets us layer in loops and effects. It's all very accessible and intuitive, offering even budding beat-makers a rewarding experience.

Of course, the flip-side is that its lack of depth and concrete objectives might alienate those looking for richer creation tools or more traditional challenges. Unquestionably a niche title, *4am's* a cool experiment that those who crave something different can easily get lost in.

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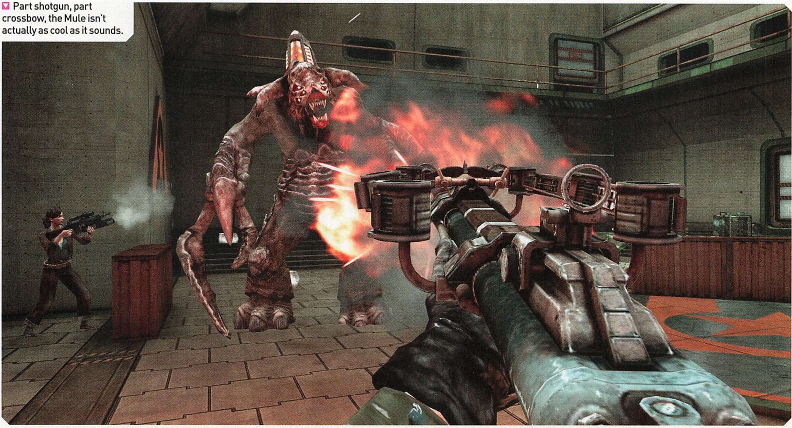
MATT CABRAL

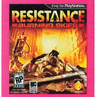


Part shotgun, part crossbow, the Mule isn't actually as cool as it sounds.

Resistance Burning Skies

A shooter for shooter's sake

Info



Format PS Vita
Pub SCEA
Dev Nihilistic Software
Price $39.99
ESRB Mature
It's like watching a rerun we only sort of liked the first time around.

Resistance: Burning Skies will go down as one of gaming's greatest missed opportunities. For years, gamers everywhere lamented the PSP's single analog stick mainly because it prevented first-person shooters from flourishing on the platform. But with the arrival of the slick new Vita and its *dual* analog sticks, we're finally able to operate camera controls and character movement independently just as we would on a console. Surely this means that *Burning Skies*—the first FPS built from the ground up for a twin-stick handheld, the proud offspring of Sony's most powerful shooter series—would be nothing short of a smashing success...right?

Sadly, the answer is no. While the game is far from a disaster, it's also not the triumph it could have been (and arguably needed to be). Instead, it's merely mediocre, lazily repurposing elements of past *Resistance* games while adding nothing of its own beyond compulsory touchscreen controls. It's a boring, by-the-numbers experience that, despite the occasional thrill, lacks polish, originality, and heart.

Fire Away

Case in point: the narrative. *Burning Skies* stars heroic fireman/empty vessel Tom Riley who, like every other *Resistance* protagonist, is a gruff white guy with a heart of gold who's stuck saving the day when he'd rather just find his family. The alien Chimera have just begun their assault on America, and when New York City is attacked, Riley reluctantly takes up arms after encouraging his wife and daughter to head for the hills. The premise is nearly identical to that of *Resistance 3*, only this comes off like the Cliffs Notes

Five Games A chronological look at Resistance

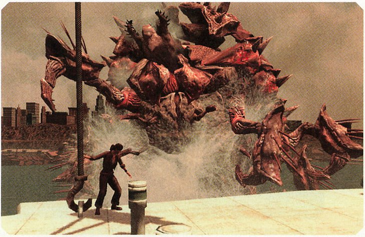
1 **Resistance: Fall of Man**
(PS3, 1951)
Nathan Hale battles the initial European invasion in the franchise's first.

2 **Resistance: Retribution**
(PSP, 1951)
Same year and setting as *Fall of Man*, but this game follows Brit James Grayson.

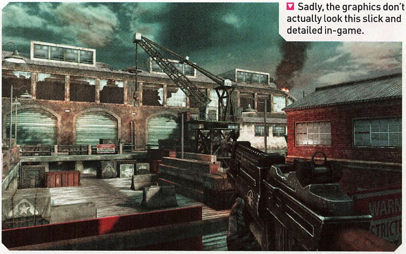
3 **Resistance: Burning Skies**
(PS Vita, 1951)
This one jumps stateside to watch Tom Riley battle Chimera in NYC.

4 **Resistance 2**
(PS3, 1953)
Two years later, Nathan Hale's final appearance follows him all the way out to San Francisco.

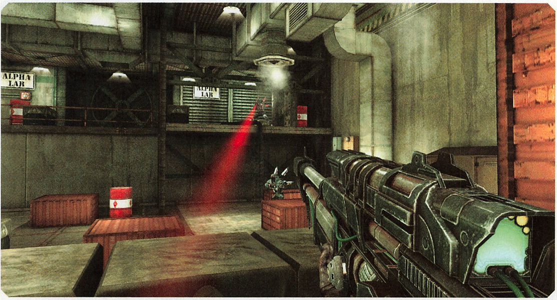
5 **Resistance 3**
(PS3, 1957)
The last game on the timeline follows Joe Capelli across the U.S. to the heart of the Chimeran presence.



Boss battles were few and far between, and when they did arrive, they often featured the same easily duped creatures.



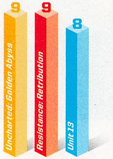
Sadly, the graphics don't actually look this slick and detailed in-game.



version (or maybe *Resistance for Dummies*). The game goes from zero to alien invasion in seconds flat and never really takes the time to add depth or context for those who might not be familiar with the series and its lore.

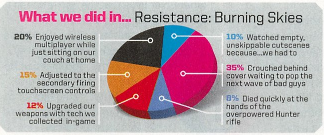
Instead, the bare-bones narrative coldly steers players down an endless series of corridors populated with chest-high cover and the occasional troupe of aliens. After some minor acclimation, the basic shooting mechanics work just fine, and clipping a Chimeran's glowing yellow tech (which, of course, causes him to freak out and explode) is just as satisfying here as it's ever been. And really we have no right to whine about the game being too linear, since that complaint could be leveled against any *Resistance* game. The real problem is that, while the console games get by on excellent production value and epic moments that keep us invested in the action, *Burning Skies* simply falls flat.

The sound design, for example, left us shooting enemies in near-total silence for the majority of the game. Without a bit of music to add tension, we kept wondering if we were even in the right place. The lackluster graphics didn't help either, offering only bland, sparsely populated environments with none of the variety that made *Resistance 3's* remarkably varied campaign so memorable. Even the boss battles featured the same bumbling monsters over and over again.



ScorePole

Burning Skies can't live up to the best Vita shooters, nor to *Resistance's* PSP installment.



What we did in... Resistance: Burning Skies

Burned Out

The game also suffers from basic problems like brain-dead AI: We caught enemies running mindlessly into a wall (or each other) more than once, and friendly AI didn't fair much better. We found the crouch and sprint functions to be finicky as well, often mistaking our frantic tapping for polite, ignorable suggestion. Luckily, the generous regenerating health and simple automatic cover system helped keep us out of harm's way, and the weapon set, though identical to other games in the franchise, provided plenty of options for mowing down our foes. On a related note: Touchscreen grenade placement is awesome (even if touchscreen alternate firing is not).

Certainly none of the game's problems are entirely damning, but they do add up to an unremarkable experience. The shooting was fun for the most part, sure, but looking back on the campaign, nothing stands out besides the occasional moment of frustration. Fortunately, *Burning Skies* also contains a full online multiplayer system, which actually functions remarkably well. The offering feels basic—limited to just three standard modes—and suffers from some of the single-player's idiosyncrasies, but ultimately, it's a novel and welcome experience for a handheld.

As a portable game, *Burning Skies* is adequate. But as the Vita's first true FPS and a member of the *Resistance* family, it's a conventional, predictable disappointment. Let's hope better shooters have the Vita in their sights.

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SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

Datura

Time to linger in the woods

Info
Format PSN **Pub**SCEA
Dev Plastic **Price** $9.99
ESRB Teen **It's like** *Myst* with Move controls, a dash of art, and an unfulfilling story.

As one might expect from the makers of the artsy *Linger in Shadows*, *Datura* is interactive art mixed heavily with old-school adventure elements. Modeled after picturesque-yet-empty adventures like *Myst* and saddled with Move-based controls reminiscent of *Heavy Rain*, the pacing is slow and the puzzles are fairly basic.

While designed with motion controls in mind, it can be a struggle to precisely position the game's disembodied hand (which serves as a cursor of sorts) using Move. The motion controls are generally intuitive overall, but *Datura* is actually more easily playable with a standard controller. At least the atmosphere succeeds admirably: The forest location is an evocative, moody place with beautiful visuals (especially in 3D), and the ambient soundtrack is superb.

The problem is simply that *Datura*—at less than two hours—teases us with a story and some explanation but never actually provides any. The puzzles are simplistic, and the whole affair just feels anticlimactic. Those with a taste for the unusual will likely enjoy *Datura*, as it's contemplative and slow and builds surprising tension at times. But ultimately, it's just an interesting yet flawed experiment. **JASON D'APRILE**

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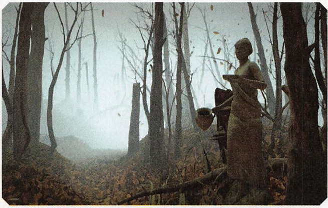
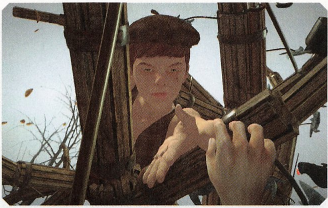
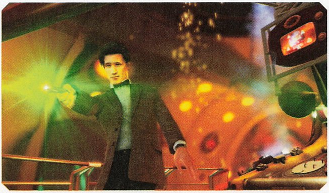


Supporting both the Move and 3D, *Datura* makes a great tech demo. Unfortunately, it only makes a so-so game.





The Doctor fiddles with objects from a distance with the old sonic screwdriver.

Doctor Who The Eternity Clock

Time is fluid, but space has only two dimensions

Info
Format PSN
Pub BBC Worldwide Digital Ent.
Dev Supermassive Games
Price $19.99
ESRB Everyone 10+
It's like *Shadow Complex* with an accent and bowtie.

Capturing the personality of the BBC's cult sci-fi TV show, *Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock* may have just enough game to satisfy fans. It has Cybermen grunting "DELETE! DELETE!" while the Daleks drone "EXTERMINATE!" and the Doctor cheerfully quips his way through temporal disaster. These familiar characters help cover for some clunky stretches of gameplay, but only to a certain extent.

Clock takes a puzzle-driven adventure game and mixes it up with a side-scrolling platformer. The Doctor and his companion River trade off running, jumping, and climbing with bouts of pushing crates, flipping switches, and other basic brain-teasing. Not a bad design template in theory, but not so great as implemented here. The puzzles have a tendency to repeat themselves. Picky scripting hampers the platforming and stealth sequences. Some areas have timing constraints or other objectives that the game doesn't make clear until we suddenly fail.

The Doctor still has real potential as a videogame hero: He thinks his way through problems, and that can be a lot more fun than blowing them up. But it's also harder to design around. Better luck next time, Doc. **DAVID F. SMITH**

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Bellator MMA Onslaught

Format **PSN** Pub **345 Games** Dev **Kung Fu Factory** Price **$14.99** ESRB **Teen**

Bellator stars real-life fighters, but unlike its rivals that focus on the deeper nuances of MMA, it ditches reality, becoming a more straightforward fighter like, say, *Tekken*. The action is fast and heavy, with an emphasis on combos and throws, mostly neglecting submissions as a viable offensive strategy. There's an interesting balance to each battle, with stamina nearly as important as health. The brutal approach is entertaining and the game's pretty fully featured for a downloadable, but the simpler combat fails to set it apart from the crowd. If you wish more fights became all-out slugfests, *Bellator* is your game, but look elsewhere for something smarter. **HENRY GILBERT**

PlayStation **7**

Battleship

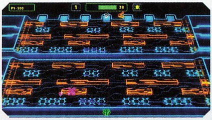
Format **PS3** Pub **Activision** Dev **Double Helix** Price **$59.99** ESRB **Teen**

Battleship the videogame is loosely based on *Battleship* the movie, which is even more loosely based on Battleship the board game. So it's bizarre that anything actually involving ships feels tacked on. Constant switching from first-person shooter action on land to strategic, grid-based naval battles forced us to split our attention mid-battle, effectively murdering engagement in either area. Both "modes" feel like separate games that were carelessly mashed together. The gameplay, inferior graphics, and "kill all aliens" story hover so staunchly between terrible and mediocre that we couldn't recommend *Battleship* even if it were a $15 download. **ANNE LEWIS**

PlayStation **3**

Frogger Hyper Arcade Edition

Format **PSN** Pub **Konami** Dev **Zombie Studios** Price **$9.99** ESRB **Everyone**



Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition mixes old-school challenge with next-gen flair, but the core mechanics remain the same: Lead our frogs past cars and over logs, and get as far as we can with the lives given before starting all over again. Alternate skins switch up the appearance of the levels, but underneath the *Contra* and *Castlevania* decorations, there's little difference. The grating, endlessly looping electronica can also be changed, but not without first exiting the game and starting over. Still, each game mode provides different trials—some nostalgic, some new—and local multiplayer brings the added bonus of screwing over our friends. That alone could be worth the meager fee. **ANNE LEWIS**

PlayStation **7**

DLC Roundup

SSX Mt. Eddie & Classic Characters Pack

Price **$7.99** ESRB **Everyone**

Kicking it old school with a double whammy of content, this DLC lets us shred the slopes of Mt. Eddie, a bustling course inspired by *SSX Tricky* that packs in nine Race and Trick drops. We also dig being able to carve up the mountain as one of seven classic characters.

Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City Echo Six Expansion Pack 2

Price **$9.99** ESRB **Mature**

Crap continues to hit the fan in Raccoon City, as zombies and gnarly mutated beasties rampage through the streets. These three Special Ops missions put us on the trail of Umbrella and the USS squad, while Claire Redfield and Sherry Birkin make cameos.

Download of the Month

Dungeon Defenders Quest for the Lost Eternia Shards - Part III

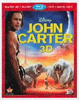
Price $3.99 **ESRB** Everyone 10+

Venture to the underwater city of Aquanos in this new trio of campaign missions sporting burly shark warriors, a massive Kraken beast, and a slew of new weapons to use against them. Beyond the core content update, new PvP and challenge missions round out this collection of goodies to help keep us glued to this tower-defense brawler.

John Carter 3D

Pulp sci-fi at its finest...no, really!

Info



Price $49.99
Creators Andrew Stanton, Mark Andrews, Edgar Rice Burroughs
Starring Taylor Kitsch, Lynn Collins, Mark Strong, Willem Dafoe
Rated PG-13
Extras Commentary, deleted scenes, Disney Second Screen, bloopers, making-of shorts.

Lovingly crafted from Edgar Rice Burroughs' classic pulp adventure tales, *John Carter* is marvelous entertainment. At the time the stories were written, pulp fiction was new, superheroes were just beginning, and writers like Burroughs paved the way for all genre fiction to come. *John Carter*, as a movie, understands this. It's as much a superhero film as it is science fantasy, so let modern sensibilities slip away just a little and enjoy this beautifully shot flight of fancy.

As a Civil War soldier who finds himself magically transported to Mars and endowed with superhuman strength as a result, Carter is a remarkably likable hero. More than that, the recreation of Mars to match the fantasy setting Burroughs envisioned is impressive. It's still the red planet, but with rivers and cities, indigenous feral natives, and a whole backstory and religion that both we, as viewers, and Carter are suddenly thrust into.

It could be argued the film lingers a bit too much on minor elements from the novels. The bizarre method of Carter's transport also seems overly complicated and questionable. Regardless, the direction and cinematography are stunning, the 3D effects are excellent, and the action is gleefully over the top. The movie might not be realistic, but that lack of realism lends itself to some amazing fight sequences and stunts.

Disney took a few chances with *John Carter*, not the least of which was going with a less family friendly PG-13 rating. The benefit is a movie with harsh natives and villains and incredibly barbaric action. The whole film captures the classic, cliffhanger look and feel perfectly, complete with revealing costumes and a gorgeous damsel in occasional distress. It also has remarkably well-realized alien characters with far more depth than standard pulp.

Disney packed a ton of extras ranging from director's commentary and deleted scenes to a variety of behind-the-scenes info and shorts. The visual quality is brilliant whether in 2D or 3D, and the movie is simply one of the coolest takes on both classic sci-fi and modern action in recent memory. It's almost criminal how overlooked *John Carter* was in theaters, so we can only hope it earns its proper due in the home.

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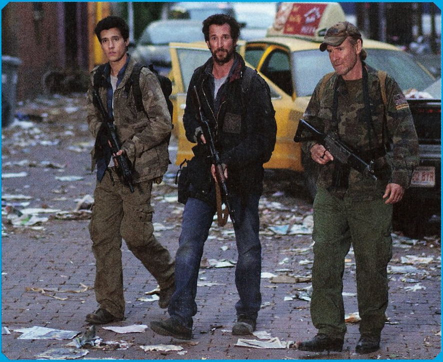
JASON D'APRILE



Falling Skies Season One

Not the end of the world as we know it

Hollywood seems incapable of doing alien invasions right, but apparently TNT and Steven Spielberg can. *Falling Skies* takes all the usual post-apocalyptic clichés—be they nukes, zombies, or aliens—and melds them into a well-paced and expertly crafted drama. Although the acting isn't universally great, Noah Wyle makes a solid lead as a history professor-turned-alien-killer.

The character stereotypes we expect are all here: the gruff military guy, the hot lady doctor, quirky smart kids, and lots of fearful, backstabbing humans who will do anything to survive. Using Spielberg's tried and true method of creating drama by putting children and dogs in peril, season one opens at a good pace—and pacing is where *Falling Skies* really succeeds. The show manages to temper potentially boring character-building with fun action sequences.

The show also does a great job of unraveling details about the aliens. The regular revelations add a lot of weight to the story, especially for sci-fi fans. *Falling Skies* even manages to throw in a few surprise twists and has a knack for ratcheting up the drama without reaching the oppressive level of shows like *Battlestar Galactica*.

At only 10 episodes, the first season goes by fast but feels just about right for the story. There are times when minor plot points seem forgotten, but overall, this season provides a satisfying first foray into alien invasions. Plus, there's commentary for several of the episodes, along with some short making-of videos.

Falling Skies manages to live up to its Spielberg pedigree. It's tense and entertaining, has excellent creature effects, some memorable characters, and isn't shy about creating an ugly portrait of humanity. The show isn't perfect, but there's definitely enough good stuff here to warrant a look on Blu-ray before checking out season two on TV. JD

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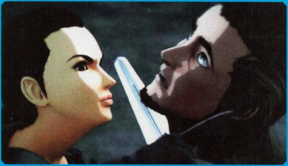
Info

Price $49.99 **Creators** Steven Spielberg, Robert Rodat **Starring** Noah Wyle, Moon Bloodgood, Maxim Knight **Rated** Not Rated **Extras** Making-of shorts, commentary for several episodes.

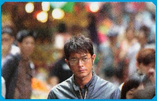
Blu-ray Roundup



Dragon Age: Dawn of the Seeker

Price $34.98 **Rated** NR

As an anime flick based on a Western videogame, *Dawn of the Seeker* definitely looks like a videogame—just not *Dragon Age*. Aside from an overabundance of scenes made up primarily of meaningful stares, this is a fun CG actioner that sticks close to the source material. 7



Accident

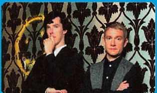
Price $26.97 **Rated** NR

Meandering between grippingly smart and painfully slow, *Accident* is begging to be remade by Hollywood. This tense tale of an assassin who kills with elaborate accident-like events and finds himself a possible target is a character study of obsession and paranoia. If only it moved a little faster... 6

Sector 7: 3D

Price $26.97 **Rated** NR

One of the first big-budget 3D movies from Korea, *Sector 7* certainly looks great. The monster is terrific, as are the effects, but the characters and script are barely on par with a Syfy original. Still, monster-movie junkies know the score and will dig the cheesy fun. 6



Sherlock Season 2

Price $39.98 **Rated** NR

Though the show tends to aggrandize its hero a bit too much at times, *Sherlock* remains one of the most intelligent shows out there. The acting is superb, the scripts tight and clever, and the visual style constantly creative. 8

Want that

Lust-have stuff for PlayStation people

Monsieur Lacenaire Sheep Invader Sweater

Featuring a houndstooth check that turns into a game of "Sheep Invader" (which can be played on the website), this sweater is made from high-end Merino wool. High fashion for gamers.

$350

monsieurlacenaire.com

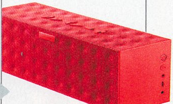
fx
mp3
fnc
hld
FLT.01
Low Pass Filter
KORG
tap bpm

Korg Kaossilator 2 & Mini Kaoss Pad 2

Sound designers and music fans can remix their songs on the fly with a host of powerful built-in effects, an internal mic, and the ability to record to a MicroSD card.

$160 each

korg.com



Jawbone Big Jambox

Larger than its brother, the Big Jambox packs in even more sound. Powerful low end once again rules the day, and it doubles as a speakerphone with surprisingly high quality voice chat audio.

$300

jawbone.com

LittleBonsai The Clip

Billed as "the world's most talented keychain," use The Clip as a pocket or belt clip, a bottle opener, a cord wrapper for headphones, or a secondary wallet/money clip. Should last roughly forever.

$15

littlebonsai.com

Carl Zeiss
Cyber-shot
SONY

Sony Cyber-shot DSC-TX20

Sony's slick ultracompact is fast to focus and shoot, with plenty of fun options accessible through its touchscreen. It's also waterproof, making it the perfect beach or poolside accessory.

$330

store.sony.com

at&t
10:08 AM
AM 10 08
Sun, Feb 26
Los Angeles
Mostly Sunny
67°
69°/50°
Market
Favorites

HTC One X

The best Android phone to date, the HTC One X features a massive 4.7-inch screen, blazing 4G LTE data speeds, a powerful camera with a dedicated image processor, and zippy performance running Ice Cream Sandwich 4.

$630

htc.com

COMIC HEROES

THE MAGAZINE ALL COMICS FANS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR...

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"I'M RIDING THE SU
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This month: celebrity lookalikes, Street Fighter pedantry, and vacuums gone wild. Buckle up!

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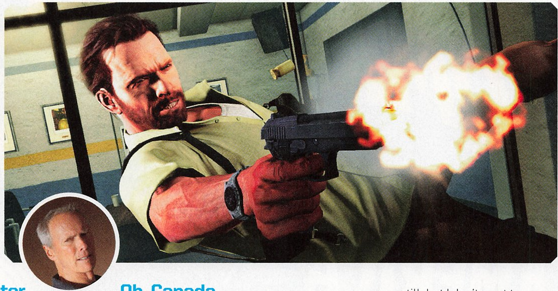
PS3.
PSP.
PS VITA
PlayStation
The Official Magazine
Issue 059 June 2012
DUST 514
PS3 and PC gamers unite to fight
Vita's NEXT 22 GAMES
REVIEWED
Disgaea 3: Absence of Detention
Yakuza: Dead Souls
I Am Alive
Deadliest Warrior: Ancient Combat
870 GAJILLION GUNS!
BORDERLANDS 2
FPS meets RPG meets your next shooter addiction
Future
LOST PLANET 3
SPIDER-M
C MICKEY 2
DISHONORED

We can't tell if Salvador is really mad at us or really mad at Maya. Either way, we're taking cover.



Doppelgangster

I'm not writing to gush about *Max Payne 3,* but instead to ask if the image on page 26 of your May 2012 issue was chosen because Max just happens to resemble Clint Eastwood. Either way, I think it's badass.

MC THE INTERNET

You might be on to something, MC...

Oh, Canada

I am forlorn. I just found out that I can no longer renew my Canadian subscription to your magazine. What gives? I may have to stop buying your magazine altogether because of this. I will probably resort to reading the magazine in the supermarket, where they don't monitor that sort of thing. Please fix this! I really want to support you guys still, but I don't want to pay newsstand prices!

CORY CANADA

As much as we love to tease our northern neighbors, PTOM would never abandon you. Canadian subscriptions are still available and can be purchased directly through our website at playstationthemagazine.com.

Soulless

Loyal subscriber here, great job on the magazine. One question: Where's the *Demon's Souls* love? You gave it and *Dark Souls* generally favorable reviews and then consigned them to the dustbin of fading memory. From Software's stone classics absolutely crush every title on your so-called Essential Collection list. Your list starts with a game that basically plays itself (*Uncharted*) and ends with a game that can't be played (*Skyrim*). That was a joke...kind of. And a basketball game?

This Sucks!

I have been playing *Skyrim* since it came out. I never had any of the lag or freezing problems like other people had. However, I noticed that my PS3 was making some bad squealing noises. I cleaned out the vents in my system with a vacuum (don't quote me, but I think this is a maintenance procedure recommended by Sony). After doing this, I noticed that my load times in *Skyrim* were basically cut in half. I don't know if it will help with the other problems, because I haven't had them, but it's worth a shot. **RANDY** THE INTERNET

Yep, it's not a bad idea to clean your PS3 every now and then, and a small, low-powered vacuum can be an effective way to do that. We doubt it'll cure all of Skyrim's *technical glitches, but it couldn't hurt.*

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Several samey shooters? Another minimally interactive movie, *Heavy Rain*? Serious gamers swear by *Dark Souls* and *Demon's Souls*. So how about it? Achieve instant credibility among hardcore gamers by adding *Demon's Souls* (or *Dark Souls*) to that list!
BEN NYQUIST THE INTERNET

Believe it or not, Ben, you've answered your own question. Yes, Dark Souls *would be an excellent choice for hardcore gamers, but only for hardcore gamers. The Essential Collection list is designed to show the average magazine reader which games are essential (important word) to the overall PlayStation experience.* Dark Souls*, though excellent, is a bit too tough and a bit too niche to qualify. And for the record, this is also why the list doesn't change much month to month. If someone's just picking up PTOM for the first time, we want to provide them with a quick, convenient snapshot of the experiences that we believe define the PS3.*

Gone But Not Forgotten

Why doesn't the PlayStation store have the old Spider-Man games for the PSone? I loved them, and so did a lot of other people. Those games made the Wall Crawler a hit in the videogame business. Why not bring the games back for old time's sake?
DAVE THE INTERNET

SPIDER-MAN
PlayStation
MARVEL
ACTIVISION

Well, in this particular instance, we're guessing it's a licensing issue. Spidey's a hot commodity, so the rights owner probably wants big bucks for anything related to the Webslinger, PSN games included. But since we get letters like this all the time, let us give you the simpler answer as well: The PSone had a metric ton of games. Just because your totally mega-obscure forgotten favorite isn't available on the PlayStation Store doesn't mean Sony hates you. It just means no one's taken the considerable time and effort necessary to make the game available. Maybe it'll happen someday, but for the time being, you might be better off digging through eBay for a physical copy.

Bad Boys

I was lazily sitting around my room today when suddenly the thought dawned on me: Where is the PS4? The PS3 came out in 2005. Rudimentary math skills tell me that it has been seven years. I thought that maybe the PS3 was such a good seller that Sony wanted to keep it going, but the PS2 had better overall commercial success and that generation only lasted from 2000 to 2005. What's the reason for this change? I'm not sure if you guys will have the answers, but I am not sure who else to turn to and the Sony support line has blocked my number.
MATTHEW BOHACIK ST. LOUIS, MO

Well, Sony has a 10-year plan for the PS3 that states... Wait, Sony support blocked your number? What did you do to them??

Technically Speaking

In your review of *Street Fighter X Tekken*, you stated that you had to be standing to block medium blows. And this is simply not true. Crouching blocks can block medium and low strikes. However, I see what may have confused you, as multiple *Tekken* characters have attacks that appear to be medium strikes that gets past the crouching guard. But in reality, they are hitting a high attack, as if they were jumping. I thought I would let you know so you guys don't go crazy doing a bunch of unnecessary block combinations to block medium strikes!
KYLE THE INTERNET

Aaaaand this is why fighting games are incredibly tricky to write about. Thanks for the tip, Kyle. Now let's go turn on Marvel Vs. Capcom 3*'s Simple Mode and pretend like we know what we're doing.*

Ask Mikel

Q **There were a couple of telekinesis games about eight years ago for the PS2: *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* and *Second Sight*. Both were unique in that telekinesis was your main weapon. The controls were unique as well. Are there any similar games for the PS3?**
JOSH
THE INTERNET

A Since your letter ruled out *Bioshock*, try the gravity gun from *Half-Life 2*, available in *The Orange Box*. It's not exactly a telekinetic power, but the mechanics function the same way. Failing that, try *inFamous 2*, PSN's *CellFactor: Psychokinetic Wars*, or *Gravity Rush* on Vita.

Et Cetera

All the other stuff that distracts PTOM

Duck Dynasty
"I initially thought this A&E show's concept was ridiculous, but now I'm hooked by the Robertson family's *Beverly Hillbillies*-esque rise to fortune and their peculiar brand of redneck shenanigans."
ROGER BURCHILL

Diablo III
"Sadly, this mouse-centric adventure isn't on PlayStation, but that handicap can't keep me from endlessly clicking on monsters and the loot that pops out after my Demon Hunter makes them explode."
MIKEL REPARAZ

Get Disowned
"What is it about Philadelphia that produces these powerful, female-fronted indie rock bands? Last year it was Des Ark, but this month it's Hop Along and their first full-band full-length. Check out hopalong.bandcamp.com!"
SCOTT BUTTERWORTH

IRREDEEMABLE

Irredeemable
"If you've ever wondered what would happen if someone like Superman ever went totally batsh-t and started murdering everyone, Irredeemable is for you. It's definitely not for the weak of heart or stomach."
ANNE LEWIS

PSN
Best Games

It's the best of the best! Get the lowdown on this month's PSN goodies no one should live without.

BEST FULL GAMES

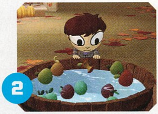
1

Creepy Crawly Platformer

Limbo

Limbo may have taken its time coming to PSN, but it was worth the wait. The game melds simple controls with supremely challenging gameplay and a beautiful, but chilling, aesthetic. It's the rare game where we die often, but never feel frustrated about it.

10
Pub **Playdead**
Dev **Playdead**



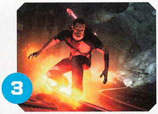
2

Tricks and Treats

Costume Quest

Sure, it's Halloween-themed, but the adventure in the game itself is timeless. With candy and monster-smiting in equal measure, this sugary delight is a charming homage to *Final Fantasy X-2*, enhanced by developer Tim Schafer's trademark sense of humor.

9
Pub **THQ**
Dev **Double Fine**



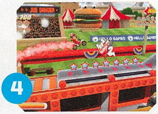
3

Frightening Lightning

inFamous
Festival of Blood

This standalone spinoff sees *inFamous* hero Cole MacGrath facing off against vampires. At stake? (groan) Cole's very own soul. It's enough to make vampires fashionably cool again—in spite of *Twilight*.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Sucker Punch**



4

Platforming Puzzle Racer

Joe Danger

An enthralling mix of *Excitebike*-style racing and insane stunt-driven platforming action, this vibrant indie gem shines brightly among the best PSN offerings available. Getting wild and dangerous on a motorbike has never been this awesome.

9
Pub **Hello Games**
Dev **Hello Games**

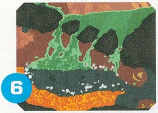
5

Zen Exploration

Flower

This gorgeous concept game makes blowing hordes of fluttering petals around a lush natural environment into an unforgettable experience that holds up against the biggest AAA offerings. Consider it a suitable substitute for a bouquet for your loved one.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**



6

Puzzle Shooter

PixelJunk Shooter

Featuring alien- and rock-blasting galore, the fourth entry in the *PixelJunk* series is easily the best. Saving trapped mining colonists with a versatile, environmental-puzzle-solving ship is a creative and challenging affair that taxes both our minds and our reflexes.

9
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Q-Games**

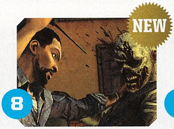
7

Role-playing Puzzler

Might & Magic
Clash of Heroes

Don't overlook *Heroes*, with its throwback 2D visuals and turn-based battle system—the RPG-flavored puzzle action requires stacking creatures for attacks and building walls for defense. It may look and play old school, but it's still mighty fun and magically challenging.

9
Pub **Ubisoft**
Dev **Capybara Games**



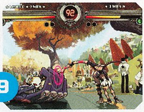
8

Brainy Zombie Tale

The Walking Dead
Episode 1–A New Day

Licensed games of movies and TV shows are usually horrific, but not in the good way. *The Walking Dead* bucks the trend with a riveting episodic adventure marked by an engrossing narrative and heart-pounding showdowns with zombie hordes.

9
Pub **Telltale Games**
Dev **Telltale Games**



9

Ladies Fight Night

Skullgirls

Although the fighting genre is in the midst of a resurgence, it's nice to see a new IP join the fray. *Skullgirls* features a cast of eight hand-drawn, superpowered femme fatales and offers an enticing mix of 2D fighting accessibility and depth. Don't overlook this one.

9
Pub **Konami/Autumn Games**
Dev **Reverge Labs**

10

We Are Not Alone

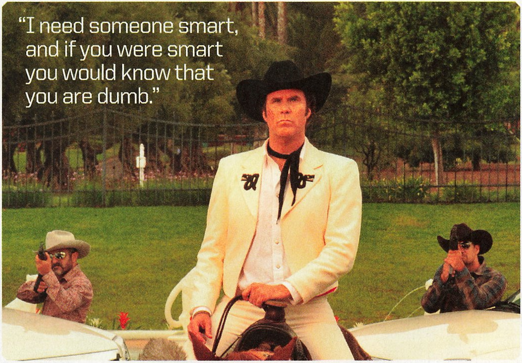
Journey

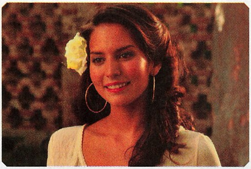
The hauntingly beautiful and atmospheric *Journey* has us wandering a desert to reach a distant mountain. Along the way, we may or may not encounter and wordlessly communicate with fellow travelers who can aid us in our quest. Is this a game, or a metaphor for life?

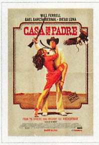
8
Pub **SCEA**
Dev **thatgamecompany**

PSN Video Delivery Service Spotlight

What we're downloading to our PS3 this month


"I need someone smart, and if you were smart you would know that you are dumb."




WILL FERRELL
GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL · DIEGO LUNA
CASA DE MI PADRE

Casa de mi Padre

ETA **July 17** Rated **R** Genre **Comedy** Studio **NALA Films**

For a man who didn't know what the phrase "San Diego" meant (see 2004's *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*), Will Ferrell sure can speak Spanish. Complete with Ferrell's hilarious but borderline uncomfortable brand of humor, *Casa de mi Padre* tells the story of a man named Armando who finds love and danger on his path to saving his family's ranch. We're not exactly proud that we love Ferrell's films so much, but these are some of the best subtitles we've read all year.

BEST FREE STUFF

1

Monkey Business

Max Payne 3 Gorilla Warfare Loadout Pack

This pack adds three items to multiplayer: a gorilla mask, a lucky coin to earn extra loot, and a booby trap to make our corpse explode when looted.

Pub **Rockstar Games**
Dev **Rockstar Studios**

skype
Signing in

2

Chatterbox

Skype App (Vita)

The idea of running two-way voice or video chat on our Vitas is just too cool to pass up, and the ability to jump to calls while we're in the middle of a game is simply awesome.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **SCEA**

3

Kick-assassin

Ninja Gaiden 3 Ultimate Ninja Pack

For those times when being a regular ninja isn't badass enough, the Ultimate Ninja ups the ante and puts our rad skills to the test against the most grueling trials and difficulty settings imaginable.

Pub **Tecmo Koei**
Dev **Team Ninja**

4

O.G.-san

Yakuza: Dead Souls Add-ons

Laden with a smorgasbord of random DLC extras, this pack is bursting at the seams with weapon upgrades, bonus karaoke modes, special items, and wacky outfits to enhance our zombie-slaying pursuits.

Pub **Sega**
Dev **Sega**

5

Augmented Firepower

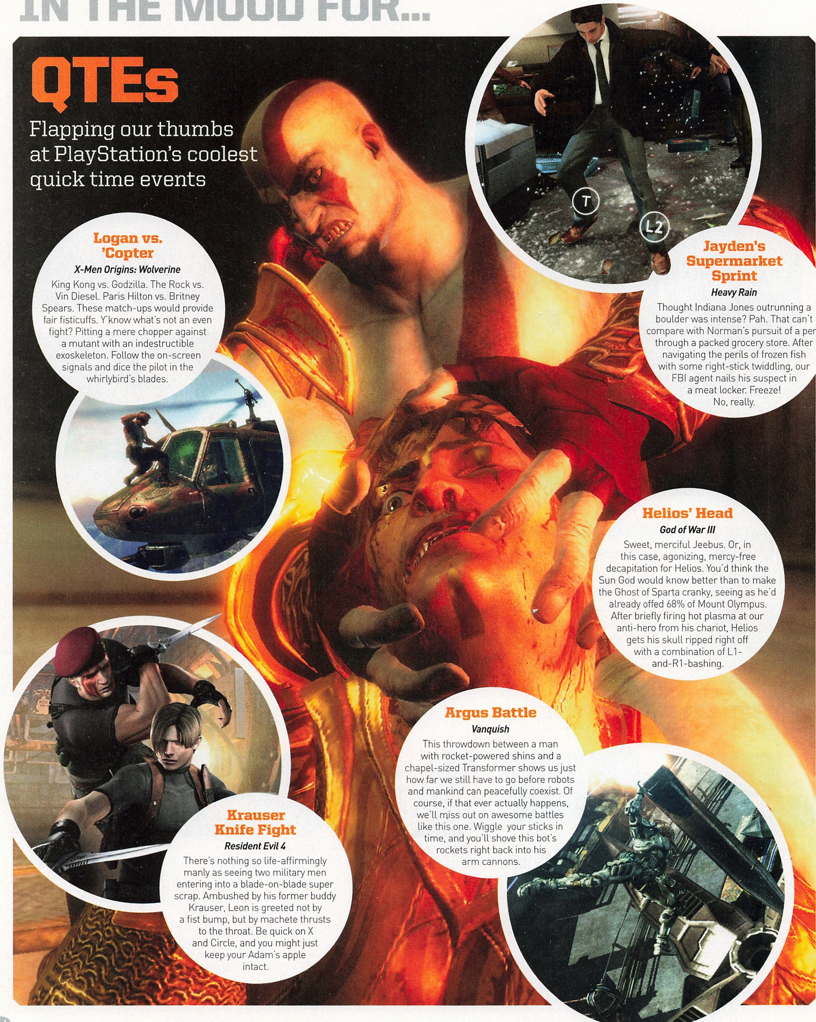
Reality Fighters Weapon Pack

Up your Vita's fighting arsenal with this wild and crazy weapons pack that adds 15 new doom-dealing implements for combatants to batter each other with, including a jetpack, cannon, and smoke bomb.

Pub **SCEA**
Dev **Novarama**

QTEs

Flapping our thumbs at PlayStation's coolest quick time events



Logan vs. 'Copter

X-Men Origins: Wolverine

King Kong vs. Godzilla. The Rock vs. Vin Diesel. Paris Hilton vs. Britney Spears. These match-ups would provide fair fisticuffs. Y'know what's not an even fight? Pitting a mere chopper against a mutant with an indestructible exoskeleton. Follow the on-screen signals and dice the pilot in the whirlybird's blades.

Jayden's Supermarket Sprint

Heavy Rain

Thought Indiana Jones outrunning a boulder was intense? Pah. That can't compare with Norman's pursuit of a per through a packed grocery store. After navigating the perils of frozen fish with some right-stick twiddling, our FBI agent nails his suspect in a meat locker. Freeze! No, really.

Helios' Head

God of War III

Sweet, merciful Jeebus. Or, in this case, agonizing, mercy-free decapitation for Helios. You'd think the Sun God would know better than to make the Ghost of Sparta cranky, seeing as he'd already offed 68% of Mount Olympus. After briefly firing hot plasma at our anti-hero from his chariot, Helios gets his skull ripped right off with a combination of L1-and-R1-bashing.

Argus Battle

Vanquish

This throwdown between a man with rocket-powered shins and a chapel-sized Transformer shows us just how far we still have to go before robots and mankind can peacefully coexist. Of course, if that ever actually happens, we'll miss out on awesome battles like this one. Wiggle your sticks in time, and you'll shove this bot's rockets right back into his arm cannons.

Krauser Knife Fight

Resident Evil 4

There's nothing so life-affirmingly manly as seeing two military men entering into a blade-on-blade super scrap. Ambushed by his former buddy Krauser, Leon is greeted not by a fist bump, but by machete thrusts to the throat. Be quick on X and Circle, and you might just keep your Adam's apple intact.

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JOURNEY
ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE
Streets of Rage II
resident evil 4
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